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Thomas F. Tomney

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THE CONFESSIONS OF THE CHURCH OF
SCOTLAND

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THE CONFESSIONS OF
THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

THEIR EVOLUTION
IN HISTORY

The Seventh Series of the Chalmers Lectures

BY

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“THE PUBLIC WORSHIP OF PRESBYTERIAN SCOTLAND”

“THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND: HER DIVISIONS AND RE-UNIONS”

ETC.

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Every age of the gospel hath had its Creeds, Confessions, Catechisms, and such breviaries and models of divinity as have been singularly useful. Such forms of sound words (however in these days decried) have been in use in the Church ever since God himself wrote the Decalogue, as a summary of things to be done ; and Christ taught us that prayer of his as a directory what to ask.—The Epistle to the Reader. Westminster Symbols.

If the Church's faith is to be, on the whole, a growing faith—a building up on a foundation already laid deep and firm in the past, and not a demolition of the earliest and most massive sub-structures, and even a remodelling of the foundation itself,—it is expedient that from time to time account be taken of the progress made, and attention be called to the structure as a whole.—A. F. MITCHELL, D.D., Introduction to Minutes of the Sessions of the Westminster Assembly of Divines.

PREFACE

THE first two lectures of this series do not require any prefatory statement as to their scope and contents. They form a piece of historic narrative which the author trusts will be found accurate, impartial, and complete so far as it goes.

As regards the remaining four lectures a word of explanation may be given. They are restricted in two respects. First. The schools of thought, streams of tendency, and religious movements which they chronicle are almost exclusively of Scottish origin and growth. The working under this restriction has been with the writer not so much a matter of choice as of necessity, for it would have been beyond his power to include within the space at disposal a treatment of such English, Continental, and American thought and speculation as have undoubtedly affected Scottish theology in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Second. Only in the case of men who are no longer in the ranks of the Church militant is the attempt made in the following pages to appreciate their work and to estimate the value of their contributions to our subject. No doubt, when dealing with quite recent movements for a reconstruction of the Church's Confession or for a modification of the

terms of adherence to the existing Symbol, it was impossible to avoid mention of theologians and ecclesiastics who are happily still with us. But in the case of all such, for obvious reasons, the present lecturer has confined himself to a mention of their names and a statement of their opinions.

One more explanation, of a personal nature. There is no other book that covers precisely the same field, so when preparing for delivery the author was drawing a somewhat lonely furrow. Then, owing to certain exigencies of time and circumstance, he has not been able to avail himself of such help of friends as was rendered him when carrying other works through the press. Under such conditions of preparation and publication perfect accuracy, though strenuously aimed at, can hardly have been attained.

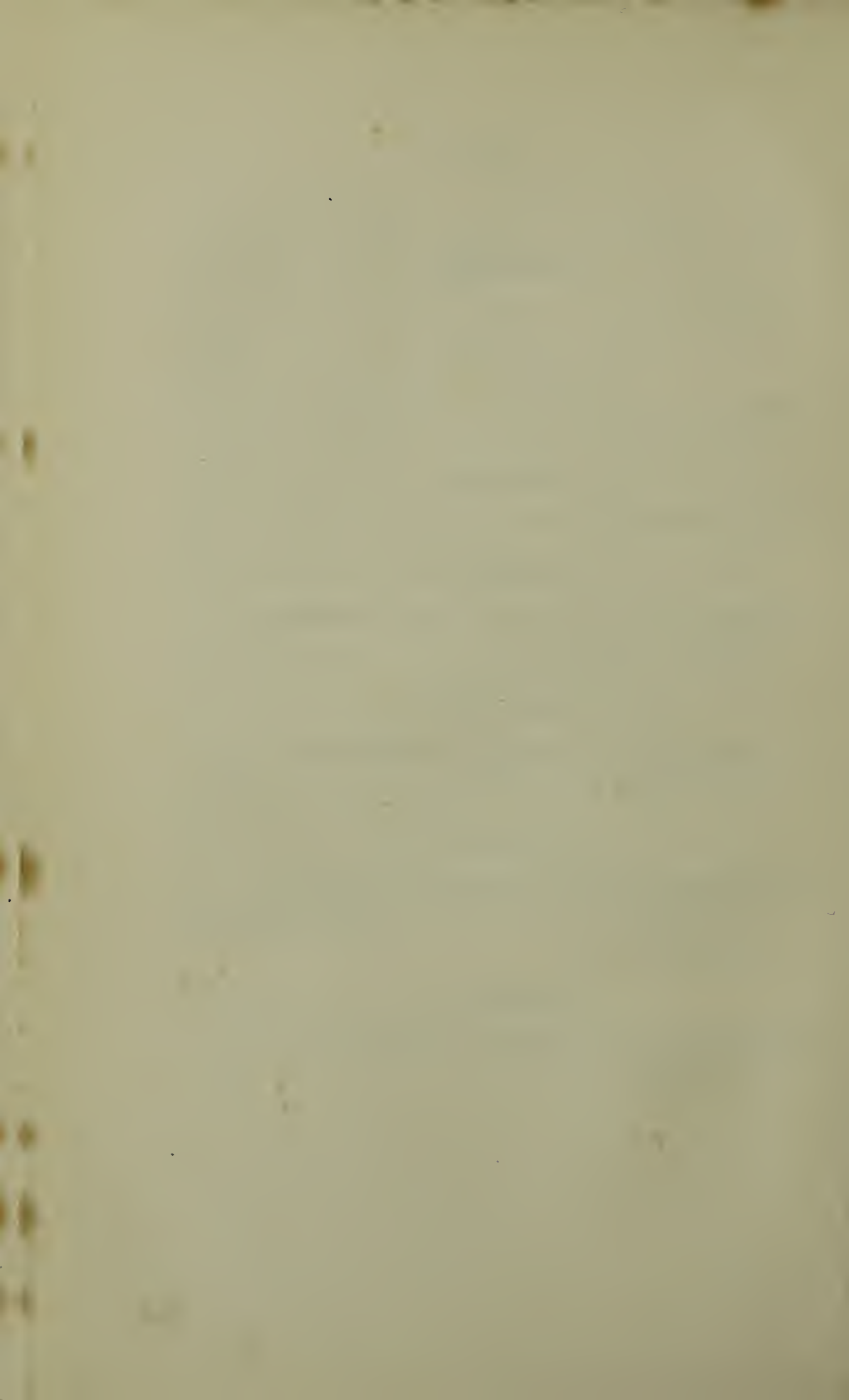
With all its defects it is hoped that this final contribution of the writer to the literature of the *Ecclesia Scotticana*, in every stone of which he takes pleasure and the dust whereof he favours, may be found to possess not only some present-day interest, but also some abiding value.

C. G. M'CRIE.

AYR, 1906.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
LECTURE I.	
SYMBOLS IN THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND PRIOR TO 1647	1
LECTURE II.	
THE WESTMINSTER CONFESSION OF FAITH	36
LECTURE III.	
WESTMINSTER TEACHING IN THE LIGHT OF FEDERALISM, MYSTICISM, AND UNIVERSALISM	64
LECTURE IV.	
WESTMINSTER TEACHING AFFECTED BY MOVEMENTS EVAN- GELICAL, SCIENTIFIC, AND CRITICAL	120
LECTURE V.	
READJUSTMENTS OF SCOTTISH CONFESSIONS AS EXHIBITIONS OF THE EXISTING FAITH, AND AS BONDS OF AGREEMENT AND ADHERENCE	208
LECTURE VI.	
RECONSTRUCTIONS OF THE CONFESSIONAL THEOLOGY OF SCOT- LAND SUBSEQUENT TO 1647	258



THE CONFESSIONS OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND.

LECTURE I.

SYMBOLS IN THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND PRIOR TO 1647.

THE documents which are to occupy our attention in this and the following lecture form the symbols.¹ of the Reformed Church of Scotland. Symbolism is that branch of theology which stands between the Biblical on the one hand and the Dogmatic or Systematic on the other, and it treats of the Creeds, Rules of Truth, and Confessions of Faith which have, from time to time, been drawn up and accepted by Christian Churches. Quite recently a distinction has been drawn between symbols called Creeds and those to which the name of Confessions is applied. A Creed, it is said, is a symbol delivered once for all by a Church claiming to be infallible; a Confession is a statement of a system of doctrine held at the time when it is drawn up, but which always contains a

¹ Σύμβολον, *signum*, *indicium*, a mark, watchword, test, not only a distinction between Christians and non-Christians, but also a *tessera militum*, a bond or deed of agreement. The Church use of the term is first found in the West (Cyprian. *Ep.* 69 *ad Magnum*); it was not in use in the East until after the beginning of the sixth century. Schaff's *Creeds of Christendom*, vol. i. p. i. n. 3. Harnack's *The Apostles' Creed*. Eng. Trans., p. 10.

reference to the Word of God as the only supreme standard, and provision for the future admitting of subsequent revision and alteration.¹ The distinction may be ingenious, but it lacks historical confirmation. There was no claim to infallibility in the Rules of Faith and baptismal Creeds drawn up by the Ante-Nicene Fathers of the second and third centuries, and there is none in the Œcumenical Creeds which superseded the earlier symbols. On the other hand the symbol of the Vatican Council in the nineteenth century which claimed infallibility for the Roman Pontiff takes the form of a Confession rather than of a Creed. It sets forth what the holy Catholic Apostolic Roman Church believes and confesses, what the same holy Mother Church holds and teaches, what she has ever held and does hold.² Such difference as exists between Creeds and Confessions is one, not so much of substance as of form. In the early Church the instruction of catechumens was carried out by means of summaries of apostolic doctrine forming the rules of faith, and as these summaries were used for the purpose of public profession at baptism they naturally took the form of a Credo.³ When, at a later although still early period, the Church felt called upon to draw up more detailed and elaborate symbols to serve the

¹ Reports on the Schemes of the Church of Scotland, 1901, pp. 1066, 1076-79.

² *Decreta Dogmatica Concilii Vaticani De Fide Catholica et De Ecclesia Christi*, A.D. 1870. Schaff's *Creeds*, vol. ii. pp. 234-71.

³ The Creed of the *Apostolical Constitutions* (circa A.D. 350) begins with *Πιστεύω καὶ βαπτίζομαι*. Schaff's *Creeds*, vol. ii. p. 39,

purpose of doctrinal standards, protests against errors and heresies, and bonds of union among her office-bearers and members, then the symbols took a confessional rather than a credal form. How soon and easily the Creed form passed into the Confessional may be seen by a reference to that ancient symbol commonly, although erroneously called 'The Creed of Saint Athanasius,' more safely designated by Church historians, from its opening word, '*Symbolum Quicumque*.' With its threefold anathema this triumphant pæan of the orthodox faith sets forth, in highly technical language, the Catholic Faith regarding the Trinity and the Person of Christ. 'Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic Faith. Which Faith, except every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly. And the Catholic Faith is this.'

The date of composition in the case of the Athanasian Creed or Confession is involved in obscurity. This is true also of the other two symbols which along with it constitute the general creeds of ancient Christianity and which receive formal or tacit acknowledgment from the Greek, the Latin, and the Protestant Churches. Of the three the earliest and the simplest is the *Symbolum Apostolicum*, or Apostles' Creed.¹

¹ From 1647, when Usher published his treatise *De Romanæ Ecclesiæ symbolo Apostolico vetere*, etc., much research has been bestowed upon this document. Among English works the outstanding are those of Harvey, Foulke, Lumby and Hort. Swainson's *The Nicene and Apostles'*

I. THE APOSTLES' CREED.

No one now thinks of claiming for this primitive rule of faith and truth inspired authority or apostolic authorship. In its earliest, most rudimentary form simply a baptismal confession of Trinitarian faith, the symbol was gradually enlarged by the insertion of articles from other summaries of apostolic tradition until it reached its present, received dimensions some-time in the close of the fifth or the beginning of the sixth century, and came into general use some hundred years thereafter.

This ancient œcumenical symbol was known and used in Scotland as far back as the days of Columba, of Drostan, and of Fergus; it served liturgical if not catechetical purposes in the Celtic Church. For proof of this we can point to what is known to archæologists as *The Book of Deer*, so called from its connection with the Columbian monastery of Deer in the Buchan district of Aberdeenshire.¹ Among other things the manuscript contains a transcript of the Gospel of St

Creed (1875), and Mortimer's *The Creeds: An historical and doctrinal Exposition of the Apostles', Nicene and Athanasian Creeds* (1902) are standard works. A table showing the gradual formation of the *Symbolum Apostolicum* is given by Schaff, vol. ii. pp. 52-55. The latest brochure on the Creed is that of Adolf Harnack. Edited by T. B. Saunders, 1905.

¹ *The Book of Deer*, edited by Dr John Stuart, Spalding Club, 1869. *Facsimiles of the Miniatures and Ornaments of Anglo-Saxon and Irish Manuscripts*. By Prof. Westwood, 1868. Dr. Stuart sees nothing improbable in concluding that *The Book of Deer* 'may have been written by a native scribe of Alba in the ninth century.' Some experts in caligraphy regard the manuscript as of Irish or Pictish origin, and suggest that the Irish missionaries by whom the monastery was founded carried the book with them across the Channel.

John, portions of the Synoptic Gospels, the fragment of an office for the Visitation of the Sick, and the Apostles' Creed. Experts in caligraphy are of opinion that the writing of the Gospels and of the Creed in the Book of Deer is that of the ninth century. To what uses the Creed symbol in their possession was put by the inmates of the monastery on the banks of the Ugie we can only surmise ; but it is safe to conjecture that it had a place in their worship of confession and adoration, and in their instruction of the surrounding pagans whom they sought to Christianize.

When, by a process of assimilation carried on in the reigns of Malcolm III., his English Queen, and their sons and successors, the old Celtic Church of Scotland became absorbed in the Church of Rome the change did not affect injuriously the position of what was even then a venerable symbol of the faith and of the holy Catholic Church. On the contrary, it was brought into prominence both in the worship of the sanctuary and in the instruction imparted by the clergy. Of the catechetical use to which it was turned clear and interesting illustration is to be found in the *Catechism* of Archbishop Hamilton written in the Scottish vernacular and printed in 1552.¹

¹ *The Catechisme* set furth be the maist reverend father in God Johne Archbischope of sanct Androus Legatnait and primat of the Kirk of Scotland, in his provincial counsale haldin at Edinburgh the xxvi. day of Januarie, the zeir of our Lord 1551. A black-letter facsimile reprint, with Introduction by Prof. Mitchell of St Andrews, was published at Edinburgh in 1882. In 1884 the Clarendon Press, Oxford, published an edition, edited, with Introduction and Glossary by Dr. T. G. Law, with a Preface by the Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone, D.C.L.

The second part of this handbook of 'common and catholic instruction' for priests and people undertakes to provide a 'plain declaration of the twelve articles of the Creed necessary to be known and believed of all Christian men and women to their eternal salvation.'

Before the Catechism was in the hands of the parish priests there were in Scotland those whom holy Mother Church stigmatised as heretics, and whom, whenever the inquisitor of heresy could lay hands upon them, she delivered to the secular arm to be sent to the fire. But the primer had not been in use for more than eight years when the upheaval took place in which the Romish hierarchy was overthrown and the faith of the heretics became the religion of the realm.

The Apostles' Creed, however, did not disappear among the ruins of the fallen Church, but found a place for itself in the literature and the liturgy of the Reformed Kirk of Scotland.¹

The Reformed faith found earliest literary expression in 'Gude and Godlie Ballates.'² In this collec-

¹ *The Creed in Scotland: An Exposition of the Apostles' Creed.* By James Rankin, D.D., 1890.

² *Ane Cōpendious buik of godlie Psalmes and spirituall Sangis collectit furthe of sindrie partis of the Scripture, with diueris utheris Ballattis changeit out of prophane Sangis in godlie sangis, for auoyding of sin and harlatric.* In 1868 Dr David Laing published an edition of 'The Gude and Godlie Ballates' from the edition of 1578, with a Preface. In 1897 *The Scottish Text Society* issued a reprint of the earlier edition of 1567 with Introduction and Notes by Prof. Mitchell of St Andrews, who had made a special study of the subject, and who made it the subject of a Lecture, *The Wedderburns and their Work, or, The Sacred Poetry of the Scottish Reformation in its historical Relation to that of Germany.* 1867.

tion of Psalms and Spiritual Songs in the Scottish dialect what are styled 'The Twelve Articles of our Faith' are given in a prose as well as in a metrical form. In the prose version the articles appear 'as they were written by the apostles to the Three Persons in Trinity.' The metrical rendering is also divided into three sections, beginning respectively with the lines, 'We trow in God allanerlie [alone],' 'We trow in Jesus Christ his Sone,' 'We trow in God the haly Spreit.' Portions of these quaint songs were in circulation in the form of broadsheets as early as 1542, although the earliest edition of the entire collection did not appear for a quarter of a century later.

But by 1547 the venerable symbol of the Creed had found a place in more ecclesiastical publications than the Songs and Ballads of the Wedderburns. For it has a primary position assigned it in 'The Form of Prayers and Ministration of the Sacraments, etc., used in the English Congregation at Geneva,' prepared by Knox, Whittingham, Gilby, Fox and Cole;¹ and, some nine years later, in what is substantially the same Protestant service book 'approved and received by the Church of Scotland.'² In both Orders the contents open with a Confession of Faith, which is simply the

¹ *The forme of prayers and Ministration of the Sacraments, etc.* used in the Englishe Congregation at Geneua: and approued by the famous and godly learned man, John Caluyn. M.D.LVI. Laing's *Knox*, vol. iv. pp. 141-214.

² *The forme of Prayers and Ministration of the Sacraments, etc.* used in the English Chruch at Geneua, approued and receyued by the Chruche of Scotland. M.D.LXVI. Laing's *Knox*, vol. vi. pp. 277-380.

articles of the Creed in an expanded form. In both orderings of service the sermon is followed by a prayer for the whole Estate of Christ's Church, which concludes with petitions in the words of the Lord's Prayer and with confession in those of the Creed. In both the order of baptism requires that the child be brought to the Church accompanied with the father and godfather, and that, at a certain stage of the service, the father (or in his absence the godfather) shall rehearse the articles of his Faith. Both of these Books of Common Order had for appendix a translation of Calvin's Catechism.¹ The instruction ministered in the Reformer's manual is so arranged as to extend over fifty-five Sundays ['Sondays']. On the second of these the foundation of our faith is stated to be 'contained in the Confession of the faith used of all Christians, which is commonly called The Creed of the Apostles'; on the following Sunday the symbol is divided into four principal parts, and on fifteen successive Sundays the meaning of the articles is unfolded on lines of Protestant teaching.

In the Reformed Book of Polity, better known as *The First Book of Discipline*, large and important use is made of Calvin's catechetical exposition of the Creed. Under the head of Schools it is provided that the youth of each parish receive instruction 'in the

¹ *The Catechisme* or Maner to teache children the Christian religion by the excellent Doctor and Pastor in Christes Church, John Calvin. M.D.LVI. Reprinted in *Cathechisms of the Scottish Reformation*. By Horatius Bonar, D.D. 1866.

Catechism as we have it now translated in the Book of our Common Order, called the Order of Geneva'; children are not to engage in a handicraft until they have a certain amount of knowledge of the Christian religion as that is contained in the chief articles of our belief; and ministers are required to devote a certain portion of the afternoon every Lord's Day to catechising children in audience of the people, following the order already 'distinguished in the Catechism printed with the Book of our Common Order, which Catechism is the most perfect that ever yet was used in the Kirk.'¹

We have seen the important place assigned by Scottish Reformers to the oldest symbol of Christendom in the devotions of the sanctuary, in the administration of baptism and in the religious training of the young. It only remains for us to note that the symbol was not excluded from the praise of the congregation. The appendages to the metrical Psalms to be found in old Scottish Psalters were not uniform in their contents. At one time there were few such, at another there were as many as twenty-five, while, in an intervening period, there were none at all.² If, however, we take two leading editions of the Scottish Psalter—those of 1611 and of 1635, we find in both a metrical version of 'The XII. Articles of the

¹ Laing's *Knox*, vol. ii. pp. 210-12. Dunlop's *Collection*, vol. ii. pp. 548-50.

² *The Scottish Metrical Psalter of 1635*. Edited by Dr N. Livingston, 1864. Dissertation III. ii. pp. 33-34.

The Book of Common Order and the Directory, edited by Drs Sprott and Leishman, 1868, pp. 209-11.

Christian Belief.' The rendering is substantially the same, the most important variation being in the fourth verse which describes our Lord's death, burial, descent into hell, and resurrection, and in which eight rather feeble lines of the earlier issue are replaced by these forcible ones in the later rendering :—

' Hee thold the last assault of death, Which did life's torments
end :
Thereafter was hee buried, And did to hell descend.
And in the third day of his death Hee rose to life again,
To the end hee might bee glorified Out of all grief and
pain.'

To what extent the Reformed Church of Scotland in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries actually made use of the *symbolum apostolicum* it is difficult, if not impossible, now to tell. From the glimpses we get of it in musty Session records, in the chatty letters of Robert Baillie, the classic charges of Bishop Leighton, and the Itinerary of the English Rector Thomas Morer, we learn that it was used to some extent and in some parts of the country.¹ It can also be gathered, however, that, under the

¹ In 1615 the Kirk-Session of Lasswade ordained that in the case of ignorant parents seeking baptism for their children a month must elapse during which they are 'to learn the Lord's Prayer, *Belief*, and Ten Commandments.' Edgar's *Old Church Life in Scotland*, Second Series, p. 222. In his Charge of 1662 Bishop Leighton propounded 'that the Lord's Prayer be restored to more frequent use ; likewise the Doxology and *the Creed*.' In the Charge of 1666 'it was enacted that the reciting of the Ten Commandments *and the Belief*, according to the acts of former Synods, is on no Lord's day to be omitted.' West's *Leighton : Sermons*, pp. 436-39. The Author's *Public Worship of Presbyterian Scotland*, pp. 230-31.

influence of a growing prejudice against what were styled 'set forms,' fostered if not created by the English Independents and Sectaries, the employment of the Creed, as also of the Lord's Prayer and the Doxology gradually fell into desuetude. And so, when the Church of Scotland laid aside the Scottish Confession of 1560 and adopted that of Westminster, and when she substituted 'The Directory' for the 'Book of Common Order,' and the Catechisms, Larger and Shorter, for those of Calvin and Ursinus, no place was found for the Apostles' Creed in any of these new documents. There is some reason to believe that the Scottish Commissioners at Westminster would have retained the old symbol, but that in the interests of peace and unity they yielded to the views of English Puritans in the matter.¹ When the Catechisms were passing through the committees of the Assembly a proposal was made to add the Creed to the Commandments and the Lord's Prayer, but was resisted by several of the English divines. A compromise was effected by these three documents being inserted at the end of the Shorter Catechism, and a brief statement, originally intended to be a prefatory note, being appended to them. The second paragraph of the statement relates to the Creed, and is in these terms: 'And albeit the substance of the doctrine comprised in that abridgment, commonly called *The*

¹ Baillie's *Letters and Journals*, *passim*. Meek's edition of Gillespie's Works, *Notes of Proceedings*, p. 108. Spratt and Leishman's *Appendix to Directory*, pp. 326-27. The Author's *Pub. Worship of Presb. Scot.*, pp. 209-10.

Apostles' Creed, be fully set forth in each of the Catechisms, so as there is no need of inserting the Creed itself; yet it is here annexed, not as though it were composed by the Apostles, or ought to be esteemed canonical scripture, as the Ten Commandments, and the Lord's Prayer, (much less a prayer, as ignorant people have been apt to make both it and the Decalogue,) but because it is a brief sum of the Christian faith, agreeable to the word of God, and anciently received in the Churches of Christ.' The further precaution was taken by those responsible for the appearance of the Creed among Westminster manifestoes of inserting in the margin of the article 'he descended into hell' this explanatory reading: 'i.e. Continued in the state of the dead, and under the power of death till the third day.' With such a position of subordination and obscurity assigned to it, it is not surprising that the pre-Reformation symbol passed out of sight and out of use in the Church of Scotland. Happily for all interests concerned this state of matters has been considerably modified since the close of last century. At the Council of the *Presbyterian Alliance* in 1880 the Creed was stated by the Committee of the Established Church on Creeds and Formulas of Subscription to have 'ecclesiastical recognition' in their Church. Since then *The Church Service Society*, which has rendered noble service in removing the reproach of bareness and unattractiveness from Scottish Presbyterian Worship, has given a place of honour to the Creed in its *Euchologion*, or

Book of Common Order.¹ And still later, in 1898, when there was published *The Church Hymnary*, authorized for use in public worship by three of the Presbyterian Churches of Scotland and by the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, it was found that the last but one of the 649 compositions which form this collection of praise material, coming after The Ten Commandments, The Beatitudes, and the Lord's Prayer, is the Apostles' Creed.

As a baptismal confession this old-world symbol may have ceased to serve any practical purpose; because of its brevity, vagueness, and silence regarding the doctrines of grace it may not be of present-day use as a display of what the Church holds and requires her office-bearers to believe. But surely every consideration of what is rich in the memories of the past, hallowed through universal assent and usage, beautiful and stately in structure and phrasing pleads for its continued and enlarged use in the public worship of Presbyterian Scotland. To the first œcumenical Creed of Christendom may fitly be applied the lines of a nineteenth-century poet descriptive of the second—

‘The faith of the Trinity lies
Shrined forever and ever, in those grand old words and wise;
A gem in a beautiful setting.
Most like the song that the angels are singing around the throne,
With their “Holy! holy! holy!” to the great Three in One.’²

¹ ‘Then shall be sung a Psalm or Hymn, after which may be said by the Minister and people standing the Apostles' Creed.’ *A Book of Common Order*, issued by the Church Service Society.

² ‘A Legend of the Council of Nice.’ By C. F. Alexander. *Contemporary Review*, February 1867, pp. 176-79.

II. THE OLD SCOTTISH CONFESSION OF 1560.

From the earliest Belief of the Church Catholic we pass to the first national Confession of the Reformed Church of Scotland. What the circumstances were in which it was composed, by whom it was prepared, and how it was dealt with by the State—these and such like details in the external history of the symbol do not call for lengthened description at our hands.¹ Enough for us to know that it was ‘believed and professed’ by the Protestants within the realm; ‘voted and ratified’ by Parliament in 1560 as a Doctrine grounded upon the infallible Word of God; and in 1567 recognised by the Estates as ‘the Confession of the Faith of the only true and holy Kirk of Jesus Christ within this realm.’ The brief statement prefixed to the treatise is a remarkable piece of writing. It throbs with the new religious life of the times in which it was drawn up. It leaps from the heart of those who declare they have long thirsted to notify to the world the sum of that doctrine which they profess and for which they have endured infamy and danger, but to which they firmly purpose to abide to the end. The ‘brief and plain Confession’ which follows is addressed to ‘dear Brethren,’ but it is specially intended to be helpful to weak and

¹ Information on these points is to be found in the histories of the period, beginning with Knox’s *History of the Reformation in Scotland*. Of special value are Prof. A. F. Mitchell’s *The Scottish Reformation* (chap. vi.) and Mr A. Taylor Innes’s *Law of Creeds in Scotland* (chap. i.). The Confession is given in Laing’s *Knox*, vol. ii., Dunlop’s *Collection*, vol. ii., and Schaff’s *Creeds*, vol. iii.

infirm brethren to whom the compilers desire to communicate the bottom of their hearts, lest they be troubled or carried away by the diversities of rumours which Satan spreads against the writers in order to defeat this, their most godly enterprise. But the paragraph of greatest value in the preface is that in which the six Reformers who prepared the symbol protest 'that if any man will note in this our Confession any article or sentence repugnant to God's holy word, that it would please him of his gentleness, and for Christian charity's sake to admonish us of the same in writing; and We, of our honour and fidelity do promise unto him satisfaction from the mouth of God (that is, from his holy Scriptures,) or else reformation of that which he shall prove to be amiss.' That statement has justly and fairly been taken to contain a disclaimer of any assumption of infallibility on the part of the writers and of any claim of finality for what they had written. There might be errors or defects in these articles of the faith; if that could be proved from the supreme standard of Scripture in any one particular, then it was within the competency of the compilers to amend their Confession and they would willingly exercise their right to reconstruct it. Let it be noted here and never afterwards forgotten that thus in the forefront of what was the first Confession of the Scottish Protestant Church reconstruction was explicitly provided for.

The symbol of 1560 consists of twenty-five Articles,

Chapters, or Heads. The arrangement of the topics treated is not the Trinitarian one of the Apostles' Creed, neither is it that either of Biblical or Systematic Theology. It is partly historical and partly doctrinal. For in the twelve opening sections the order of Revelation is observed, these treating successively of God; the Creation; Original Sin; the Revelation of the Promise; the Continuance, Increase and Preservation of the Kirk; the Incarnation of Christ Jesus; the God-Man; Election; Christ's Death, Burial, Resurrection and Ascension; the Holy Ghost. The remaining thirteen Chapters have their contents arranged in a doctrinal sequence, and treat of Good Works; The Law; The Kirk; The Immortality of the Soul; The Notes of the true Kirk; The Scriptures; General Councils; The Sacraments; The Civil Magistrate; The Remission of Sins; Resurrection of the Flesh, and Life Everlasting. As the ordering of the matter in the Scottish symbol is not scientific so the treatment of the several topics is devoid of exhaustive and logical elaboration. The manifesto, it has been truly said, 'reads rather like a declaration of the martyrs than a compend of divinity.'¹ The Confession of 1560 is an original production, racy of

¹ 'The Confession ran in the name of the Estates, and was conceived much more in the spirit and tone of a solemn testimony put forth to the world by a nation of earnest Christians—a testimony which they were ready to seal with their blood—than in the cold, scientific manner of a theological document. Its language is earnest and glowing. It is the warm utterance of a people's heart.' It 'reads rather like a declaration of the martyrs than a compend of divinity.' *The Scottish Reformation: A Historical Sketch.* By Peter Lorimer, D.D., 1860, pp. 247-48.

the soil from which it sprang, bearing on every line of it the stamp of the *perfervidum ingenium Scotorum*. At the same time it was the production of scholars and theologians, who were conversant with the Confessions and Catechisms, the systems and controversial treatises of the Lutheran and Reformed Churches in their day. And so there is not only a general agreement in its doctrinal definitions with other Reformed symbols, but there are now and again such coincidences in expression as indicate indebtedness to others for the language employed. The *Institutes* of John Calvin and the *Summa Doctrinæ* of John Alasco, the *Confession* of the English Congregation at Geneva, and the French *Confession* subscribed by students in the Academy of that city—these were freely laid under contribution by the earliest symbol makers of Scotland.¹ By a recent biographer of Knox the Confession with the drawing up of which that Reformer had a leading share has been described as ‘to all intents and purposes a mere compendium of Calvinistic theology in the fully developed form it had assumed in Calvin’s later days.’² It would be a more accurate representation of the theology of the Scottish divines in the sixteenth century to say that its Calvinism is of a type as old as the days of the Apostle Paul and of St Augustine, and of a milder form than that embodied in the Thirty-nine Articles

¹ Compare the sixth chapter in Prof. Mitchell’s *Scottish Reformation*, pp. 99-122.

² *John Knox: A Biography*. By Prof. G. Hume Brown, vol. ii. chap. vi. p. 122.

of the Church of England, which were drawn up in the year following, and in the thirty-three chapters of the Westminster Confession of the next century. Election, for example, is rather assumed as an unquestioned verity than treated scientifically as a dogma, and is handled almost entirely from the practical point of view, in its bearings upon Christian duties and privileges. Original Sin has a place in the Scottish symbol, but simply as the transgression of our first parents by which the image of God was utterly defaced in man, and the first transgressors and their posterity became enemies to God, slaves to Satan, and servants unto sin. Nothing is said of that element in the sinfulness of man's fallen estate which forms part of Original Sin according to Westminster teaching—'The guilt of Adam's first sin.'¹

The Apostles' Creed is altogether silent regarding Holy Scripture. The primary usage of the symbol as a baptismal formula accounts for the omission. Both in the preface and in the body of the old Scottish Confession there is distinct and emphatic acknowledgment of the supreme authority of the written Word of God. In the nineteenth Article—Of the authority of the Scriptures—they are declared sufficient to instruct and make the man of God perfect, their authority is affirmed to be of God and not dependent on either man or angels. In the Chapter, which treats of the Notes by which the true Kirk is decerned from the false and who shall be the judge of the doctrine, the

¹ *Confession of Faith*, chap. vi. § 3. *L. Cat.* Q. 25. *S. Cat.* Q. 18.

teaching of the Reformed Churches is described as 'contained in the written word of God, to wit, in the books of the Old and New Testaments, in those books we mean which of the ancient have been reputed canonical, in the which we affirm that all things necessary to be believed for the salvation of mankind are sufficiently expressed.'

The defects and the excrescences in this document are apparent to every present-day reader. There is an absence of the judicial and the temperate in the spirit that pervades it; there is at certain stages unrestrained indulgence in the language of denunciation and vituperation. In the preface the upholders of the old Church are denounced as 'impudent blasphemers,' 'sons of perdition, who boldly damn that which they have neither heard nor understood,' and they are afflicted with 'cankered malice' which nothing can cure. In the body of the treatise the pre-Reformation Church has such epithets applied to it as 'pestilent Synagogue,' 'the filthy Synagogue,' 'the horrible harlot,' 'the Kirk malignant.'¹ The members of that Church are stigmatised as Papists who have 'perniciously taught and damnably believed' the

¹ Prof. Mitchell traces the word 'malignant,' which figures so largely in Scottish Church History and disfigures the writings of Scottish ecclesiastics (not excepting saintly Leighton), to the Vulgate rendering of an expression in Ps. xxvi. 5—*ecclesiam malignantium*, translated both in the A.V. and the R.V. 'congregation of evil-doers.' When Episcopus was leaving the Synod of Dort, in 1619, he exclaimed, *exeo ex ecclesiam malignantium*. Hales' *Letters from the Synod. Works* vol. iii. p. 123. John Knox employed the term in his dispute with Friar Arbuckill. *Works*, vol. i. p. 100.

doctrine of transubstantiation, and the awful language of Scripture concerning the wrath of God, the torment of fire and brimstone and the smoke thereof is applied to 'such as now delight in vanity, cruelty, filthiness, superstition, or idolatry.' When censuring and condemning this coarseness of language, this unstinted use of abusive terms we must, of course, make all allowance for the spirit of the age, the stress and strain of the conflict in which the Reformers of the sixteenth century were involved. There was coarseness in the literature and the manners of the times, coarseness of such a nature, carried to such an extent as to do violence to our sense of ethical purity and becomingness. At the same time, the absence of scientific method and logical precision, taken along with the occasional intemperance of the language—these are peculiarities such as render a return to the old Scottish Confession of 1560 utterly impossible. It was natural that Edward Irving, who breathed the spirit of the sixteenth while he lived in the nineteenth century, who had much of the fiery zeal of John the Baptist and of John Knox, should depreciate the Westminster Confession and laud the older standard with the highest encomium which he was capable of bestowing upon a work of fallible men. It was characteristic of this Scot of genius and eccentricity that for several years he read it twice in the course of each year to his London flock, and that in his estimate 'the Scottish Confession was the banner of the Church, in all her wrestlings and conflicts, the Westminster

Confession but as the camp-colours which she hath used during her days of peace ; the one for battle, the other for fair appearance and good order.'¹ Few, if any, pastors of the present century are likely to follow his example or to adopt his appreciation. If the imagery of banners and colours is to be retained might it not be more appropriate to say that the venerable Scottish standard is entitled to the respect paid to the weather-stained colours hung up in Cathedral or Church building, while that of Westminster is the banner under which the Church still prosecutes her aggressive and defensive warfare ?

III. THE CONFESSION OF FAITH, OR NATIONAL COVENANT OF 1581.

When, in 1578, James VI., a lad of fourteen, began to exercise the functions of royalty in Scotland, he was at pains to assure his subjects that he was a sound Protestant and a staunch Presbyterian. He found it difficult, however, to dissipate suspicions and to beget confidence. It was matter of rumour that papal dispensations had been granted to Roman Catholics in Scotland, permitting them to subscribe or swear anything provided they remained faithful to the Pontiff. It was observed that numerous Jesuits and Seminary priests were crossing the English Channel, and that monks and friars were to be met with up

¹ *The Confessions of Faith and the Books of Discipline of the Church of Scotland of date anterior to the Westminster Confession.* By the Rev. Edward Irving, M.A., 1831. Preface, xciii.

and down the country. Worst of all, it was known that the Court favourite of the boy king was his cousin Esmé Stewart, who came on a visit to his relative in Scotland, but who came to stay. Was not this son of France a Papist? True, the Earl of Lennox, for such the foreigner became six months after he left France, consented to become the pupil of a Protestant minister at Leith, and so profited by the instructions of worthy David Lindsay that in a short time he felt warranted to inform the General Assembly that he had been called to the knowledge of salvation and had subscribed the confession of his faith in the King's Chapel at Stirling.¹ But this rapid conversion to the Reformed faith failed to allay public suspicion. A stronger pledge of royal and national Protestantism was imperatively demanded. And so a declaration was drawn up in which the most obnoxious tenets and practices of Romanism are fully stated and most emphatically condemned.² The drafting of the document was entrusted to the competent hands of John

¹ *The Booke of the Universall Kirk of Scotland.* Part ii. p. 466.

² *The Confession of Faith of the Kirk of Scotland: or, The National Covenant.* The approval of the symbol by the General Assembly of 1581 is given in the *B.U.K.S. ut sup.* p. 512. The symbol itself in its original form will be found in the same, pp. 515-18, under the title of, 'Ane short and general Confessione of the true Christiane Fayth and Religione, according to Godis Vorde, and Actis of our Perlament, subseryued by the Kingis Maiestie and his Houshold, with sindrie otheris, to the glory of God, and good example of all men.' In its expanded form the document will be found in Dunlop's *Collection*, vol. ii., in E. Irving's *Confessions of Faith*, and in Schaff's *Creeeds*, vol. iii. It has a place along with *The Solemn League and Covenant* in *The Subordinate Standards and other authoritative Documents of the Free Church of Scotland.* 1857.

Craig of Catechism fame, at that time minister of Holyrood and King's Chaplain. The first signatures appended were those of the Sovereign, his household and the members of the Privy Council. Subsequently it was signed by all ranks and classes of persons in the realm. The General Assembly stamped it with ecclesiastical approval and sanction, declaring it to be 'a true and Christian Confession, to be agreed unto by such as truly profess Christ and his true religion'; and that action of the Supreme Court quickened the activity of Reformed ministers in circulating and securing the subscription of the document in their several parishes.¹ From what has now been stated the significance of the various titles which have been given to this Protestant symbol will be apparent. At first it was called 'The King's Confession,' as it was at the royal instigation that Craig drew it up and the earliest signature was that of King James. It is sometimes called 'The Second Confession,' to distinguish it from that of 1560; and sometimes 'The Negative Confession,' because, while the earlier one contained a positive declaration of the Reformed Faith, this later one took the form of a repudiation or disclaimer of the errors of the ancient faith. But the title most frequently applied to this document is that of 'National Covenant.' From the first draft subscribed by King James in 1581, throughout

¹ 'The subscriptions to the National Covenant in the united parishes of Anstruther, Pittenweem, and Abercomby, amounted to 743. (Register of the Kirk Session of Anstruther).' M'Crie's *Life of Andrew Melville*, chap. iv.

subsequent enlargements, and down to the time when the last subscriber was Charles II. in 1651, the national document had structural resemblance to those bands, bonds, or covenants by which Scottish Protestants have been wont to pledge themselves to God and to one another for the maintenance of religion and the removal of all that is contrary to 'The blessed Evangel, received, believed, and defended by the Kirk of Scotland.' And so, successive subscribers do a great deal in the way of protesting, promising and swearing, expressing detestation, abhorrence and refusal, calling the living God, the Searcher of hearts, to witness and renewing their covenant with Him. 'We,' they say, 'abhor and detest all kind of Papistry in general and particular heads. We, in special, detest and refuse the usurped authority of that Roman Antichrist upon the scriptures of God, upon the kirk, the civil magistrate, and consciences of men.' In particular, detestation is expressed and an emphatic protest lodged against such dogmas and practices of the Man of Sin as 'his erroneous doctrine against the sufficiency of the written word; the nature, number, and use of the holy sacraments; his five bastard sacraments; his cruel judgment against infants departing without the sacrament; his blasphemous opinion of transubstantiation; his devilish mass; his blasphemous priesthood; his profane sacrifice for sins of the dead and the quick; his canonization of men; calling upon angels or saints departed, worshipping of imagery, relicks, and crosses; dedicating of kirks, altars, days; his

purgatory, prayers for the dead ; praying or speaking in a strange language, with his processions, and blasphemous litany ; his holy water, baptizing of bells, conjuring of spirits, crossing, sayning [consecrating], anointing, conjuring ; his three solemn vows, with all his shavelings of sundry sorts ; his erroneous and bloody decrees made at Trent, with all the subscribers or approvers of that cruel and bloody band, conjured against the kirk of God.' Against these and many other doctrines and ordinances of the Roman Antichrist all who subscribe the National Covenant enter into 'union and conjunction,' promising and swearing by the GREAT NAME OF THE LORD OUR GOD, to continue in the profession and obedience of the true reformed religion, to defend the same, and to resist all contrary errors and corruptions, according to their vocation, and to the uttermost of that power that God hath put in their hands, all the days of their life.

While the document of 1581 is thus a Covenant in name, in structure, and in contents, it is none the less a Confession. It is so designated in the Acts of Assembly and Parliament ordaining and ratifying it—'The Confession of Faith and Covenant'; and in collections of symbols and books of Church Standards the double title appears in alternative form—'The Confession of Faith of the Kirk of Scotland, or, The National Covenant.' Then, what is more conclusive still, the writer and the subscribers of the bond regarded it in the light of a Confession. Repeatedly in the several paragraphs, do they term it, 'this our

Confession,' 'the Confession of Faith above written,' 'the foresaid Confession.' In this connection the most noteworthy thing is the reference occurring now and again to the earlier Confession of 1560. That symbol is styled in the body of the document, 'a former large Confession established by sundry acts of lawful General Assemblies and of Parliaments, unto which it [the Confession of Faith above written] hath relation.' And what is the relation in which the latter symbol stands to the former? That is impressively set forth in the stately diction of the opening paragraph of the second Confession of Faith of the Kirk of Scotland, or, National Covenant. 'We all and every one of us underwritten,' so it reads, 'protest, That after long and due examination of our own consciences in matters of true and false religion, we are now thoroughly resolved in the truth by the word and Spirit of God : and therefore we believe with our hearts, confess with our mouths, subscribe with our hands, and constantly affirm, before God and the whole world, that this only is the true Christian Faith and Religion, pleasing God and bringing salvation to man, which is now, by the mercy of God, revealed to the world by the preaching of the blessed Evangel ; and is received, believed, and defended by many and sundry notable kirks and realms, but chiefly by the Kirk of Scotland, the King's Majesty, and three Estates of this realm, as God's eternal truth and only ground of our salvation ; *as more particularly is expressed in the Confession of our Faith*, stablished and publicly confirmed by

sundry Acts of Parliament, and now of a long time hath been openly professed by the King's Majesty, and whole body of this realm, both in burgh and land. To the which Confession and Form of Religion we willingly agree in our consciences in all points, as unto God's undoubted truth and verity, grounded upon his written word.' There is more in this eminently national and historical document than 'a renewed adherence to the old Confession,' which is all some are disposed to find in it.¹ But there is certainly adherence, all the more significant because it is combined with enlargement, expansion in certain directions, bringing the symbolic documents of the Scottish Church up to date and rendering them the utterances of living men.

IV. THE ABERDEEN CONFESSION OF 1616.

Episcopacy has given one Confession to Presbyterian Scotland. So long as the Revolution Settlement is undisturbed it will not give another. This symbol is a product of the mongrel Episcopacy associated with the name and reign of James VI. As early as 1597 James formed the intention of forcing Episcopacy upon Scotland, of substituting prelatic for presbyterian polity. Certain clergymen, bearing the title of archbishop and bishop, with a right to sit and vote in Parliament, were constituted the Spiritual Estate of

¹ *The Law of Creeds in Scotland.* By A. Taylor Innes. Chap. i. p. 37.

the realm.¹ Meetings of presbyteries and synods were presided over by the bishop of the diocese as perpetual or constant moderator. To the prelates alone was committed the power to ordain and to depose, as also the right of passing sentence of excommunication and of absolution. The calling of General Assemblies was vested in the King as a prerogative of the crown, and any ecclesiastical conventions held without his permission were declared to be unlawful. When these arbitrary measures had been taken the sovereign granted his 'consent, licence, permission and allowance' for holding an Assembly upon the 13th day of August, 1616.² Accordingly upon that day there gathered together in the city of Aberdeen a goodly number of Lords and Barons, Bishops, Moderators of Presbyteries and Ministers of parishes. The Earl of Montrose presented himself as King's Commissioner, and John Spottiswoode, styled Archbishop of St Andrews, took the moderator's chair, not by election, but as of right.³ Noblemen, 'with silks and satins,'⁴ sat as members without commissions, while

¹ The Assembly of 1610, which sanctioned this procedure of the King, did what it could to limit prelatie power by inserting among 'certain heads concerning the special points of Discipline, within the Church of this realme' one to this effect:—'The Bishops salbe subiect, in all things concerning thair lyfe, conversatioun, office, and benefice, to the censures of the Generall Assemblie; and being found culpable, with his Majesties adyce and consent, to be deprivit.' *B.U.K.S.* p. 1097.

² *B.U.K.S.* pp. 1114-15.

³ 'So Mr John Spotswood, Archbishop of Sanct Androis, stepped into the Moderator's place without election.' *B.U.K.S.* p. 1116.

⁴ 'A number of Lords and Barones decored the Assembly with silks and satins, but without lawfull Commission to vote.' *Ibid.*

ministers produced the missives of their bishops. No roll of members was made up, and no commissions were attested.¹

On the fourth day of the sittings of this non-presbyterial convention the royal Commissioner produced a paper which contained instructions from his Majesty to be propounded to the clergy and laity. The particulars were fourteen in number, and the fifth in order was to the effect that 'a true and simple Confession of Faith be set down, to the which all shall swear before they be admitted to any office in Kirk or Commonweal, and all students in Colleges.'² As the confessional and liturgical changes contained in the King's communication had been contemplated by James and his coadjutors for some considerable time, the draft of a new Confession was already in existence, and had been submitted to the two Scottish Archbishops four years earlier. And so on the day following that upon which the Commissioner tabled the royal mandate this symbol was laid before the Assembly, and, after being revised by a committee of the house, was approved of as one to be 'universally received throughout this whole kingdom, to the which all hereafter shall be bound to swear and set their hands.'³

¹ 'The Catalogue of the Presbyteries was not called, nor Commissioners considered, whether free or limited.' *Ibid.* Also Calderwood's History, vii. p. 223.

² *B.U.K.S.* p. 1123.

³ *Ibid.* p. 1127. The drafting of the Confession is attributed by Scot of Cupar to Mr John Hall and Mr John Adamson, *Apologetical Narration*, Wod. Soc. Ed. p. 243. It is said by Calderwood to have been revised by William Cowper of Galloway, Robert Howie of St Andrews

The Articles of Religion set forth in this 'new Confession of Faith' have no titles or numbers attached to them and they do not follow the order of any earlier or contemporaneous symbol of the Christian Faith; but the following summary of the topics touched upon may convey a fair idea of the teaching of the prelatie Confession. At the outset the unity and attributes of God, and the Trinity of Persons in the Godhead are briefly treated of. Out of this there flows a statement of the Divine decrees in general, and of that decree in particular in which God 'according to the good pleasure of His will, for the praise of the glory of His grace, did predestinate and elect in Christ some men and angels unto eternal felicity; and others He did appoint for eternal condemnation, according to the counsel of His most free, most just and holy will, and that to the praise and glory of His justice.' In subsequent paragraphs the creation of all things out of nothing; the fall of some of the angels; the disobedience of 'Eva' and Adam, with the consequent corruption of all their posterity;

(Andrew Melville's successor), Forbes of Corse, George Hay, and William Struthers. *History*, vii. pp. 233-42. As a whole the Aberdeen Confession may be regarded as the work of Howie, whose literary and theological acquirements the biographer of Andrew Melville pronounces to be 'respectable.'

The symbol under the heading of 'The new Confession of Faith' is given in the *B.U.K.S.* pp. 1132-39. It begins with the old credal formula:—'We believe with our hearts and confess with our mouths these Articles of Religion following'; and it ends with 'Which as we believe with our hearts, so we confesse with our mouthes, and subscribe with our hands; understanding them plainly as they are here conceived, without equivocation or mental reservation whatsoever. So may God help us in the great day of Judgment.'

the redemption and restoration in time of those, and only of those, who are elected before all time—these things are fully asserted. After this follow sections on ‘the Canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, which are Genesis, Exodus, etc., *exclusis Apocryphis*; on the Lord Jesus Christ, who has the natures, divine and human, united together in a personal union, so that in one admirable Person the two natures are distinct, and not confounded in respect of their essence, their essential properties, and proper operations’; on Justification, which consists of the remission of sins and the imputation of the righteousness and obedience of Christ; on Good Works, which are ‘the way to the Kingdom of God’; on the Perseverance of Saints and the certainty of Salvation; on the Word and Sacraments, as ‘instruments of the Holy Ghost to work and confirm faith in man’; and on the State of Men after death, the souls of God’s children after separating from their bodies *immediately* passing into heaven, and there resting from their labours until the day of judgment, ‘like as the souls of the wicked *immediately* pass into hell, there to remain till the day of judgment, which day, being conjoined with their bodies, they shall sustain the judgment of everlasting fire—besides these two a third place for souls we do not acknowledge.’ The penultimate paragraphs of the symbol treat of the Church and the State. The holy catholic or universal Kirk is ‘the holy company of all those, who, according to the purpose of God’s eternal election, since the beginning of the world,

were called and, to the end of the world, shall be called to the Kingdom of Christ, and to the communion of eternal life in Him.' Out of this body there is no salvation. It is partly triumphant in heaven, partly militant on earth. The latter part is divided into particular Kirks, visible and conspicuous to the eyes of men. Only those particular Kirks are pure which 'continue in the doctrine of the Prophets and Apostles according to the holy canonical Scripture, worshipping God purely, and ministering the Sacraments according to the same.' The worship of God by the Church is to be only according to His own will, revealed in His Word, and therefore 'all will-worship, all invocation of Saints or Angels, all worshipping of images, crucifixes, relicts, and all other things which are beside the true God' are to be abhorred. As regards civil government it is made matter of belief and confession 'that God hath ordained Kings, Princes, and Magistrates for the good of the Commonwealth, for the better governing in the Kirk, and to be nurse fathers of the same.' That being the case the subjects of rulers are bound to pray for them, and to obey them 'in all things they command lawfully, not repugnant to the will of God.' The closing paragraph of the Aberdeen Confession will bear being quoted at length. 'We believe and constantly affirm that the Kirk of Scotland, through the abundant grace of our Lord, is one of the most pure Kirks under heaven this day, both in respect of truth in doctrine, and purity in worship: and

therefore, with all our hearts, we adjoin ourselves thereto, and to the religion publicly professed therein by the King's Majesty, and all his true subjects, and authorized by his Majesty's laws; promising by the grace of God to continue therein to the end of our life, according to all the articles which are here set down: which as we believe with our hearts, so we confess with our mouths, and subscribe with our hands; understanding them plainly as they are here conceived, without equivocation or mental reservation, whatsoever. So may God help us in the great day of Judgment.

Such are the main contents and general bearing of this prelatie symbol drawn up in the time of the first episcopacy in Scotland. Two features claim our appreciation—the marked absence of denunciation of errorists and their tenets, and the evangelical ring pervading the more strictly doctrinal portion of the document. There is nothing of the vehement vituperation, the heaping of terms of opprobrium which disfigure the two earlier products of Scottish creed compilers. The Church of Rome is never mentioned, and when such things are referred to as 'the supposed reiterating of the sacrifice of Christ in the mass,' 'the intercession of Saints and Angels,' 'the work of a sacrificing Mass-Priest,' the reference is made in language of strict moderation. In point of calmness and fairness of judgment, historical balance, and moderation of language, the northern Confession of 1616 is entitled to rank alongside of

the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England and the thirty-three chapters of the Westminster symbol. Then, no less striking is the other feature. No more evangelical exhibition of the cardinal truth of justification by faith alone could be desired than is to be found in the three compact paragraphs devoted to the topic in the 'true and simple Confession of Faith' set down at Aberdeen; and in the case of what is regarded as a distinctive feature of Calvinistic theology—the doctrine of predestination—the teaching of the episcopal document is 'quite as distinctively Calvinistic as the Westminster Confession.'¹

With these laudable features to secure its acceptance at least in certain quarters it is somewhat surprising to find what little hold this Scottish symbol has taken of public interest, and how speedily it passed out of notice. It is not so much as mentioned either by the biographer of Knox in his *Life of Andrew Melville* or by Dr Schaff in his monumental work on the *Creeeds of Christendom*. Even the episcopalian historian Professor Grub fails to see what precise object there was in bringing it forward and what, if any, good resulted from its adoption. Presbyterian chroniclers of the period write of it in terms of disparagement, one of the most

¹ Prof. A. F. Mitchell. *The Scottish Reformation*. Chap. vi. p. 118. Prof. Grub affirms that the chief difference between the Confession of 1616 and that of 1560 is that the later one contains 'a more marked enunciation of the doctrine of Calvin in regard to Election and Predestination,' *History*, vol. ii. p. 306.

recent condemning it as 'meagre in its utterances on Church government and discipline, vague in doctrinal points, an evasive trimming document, hollow and untrue.'¹ In the case of this latter school of historians one may hazard the conjecture, without any breach of charity, that the symbol was hopelessly prejudiced because of its close connection with the 'Five Articles of Perth' (1618) and the Service Book known as Laud's Liturgy (1636-37), forming with these no inconsiderable part of that ecclesiastical edifice which James and his son Charles reared with such expenditure of pains and such persistency of purpose, but which was swept away by the Glasgow Assembly of 1638. Could any good thing come out of the packed, prelatial Assembly of Aberdeen? Well, worse things have emanated from that city of anti-covenanting doctors than the Confession of 1616.

¹ *History of the Church in Scotland*. By John Macpherson. Chap. v. pp. 170-71.

LECTURE II.

THE WESTMINSTER CONFESSION OF FAITH.

I.

ON the 12th of June 1643 that famous body of Englishmen known in history as the Long Parliament issued an Ordinance on their own responsibility and without the consent of the reigning sovereign, Charles I. In the preamble the Lords and Commons assembled in Parliament declare the purpose of the Ordinance to be¹ 'the calling of an Assembly of learned and godly Divines, and others, to be consulted with by the Parliament for the settling of the government and liturgy of the Church of England; and for vindicating and clearing of the doctrine of the said Church from false aspersions and interpretations.'

As some nine months earlier a Bill had passed both houses of Parliament condemning the prelatic hierarchy as 'evil, offensive, and burdensome to the kingdom,' the Lords and Commons were resolved

¹ An Ordinance of the Lords and Commons assembled in Parliament, for the calling of an Assembly of learned and godly Divines, and others, to be consulted with by the Parliament, for the settling of the government and liturgy of the Church of England; and for vindicating and clearing of the doctrine of the said Church from false aspersions and interpretations. June 12, 1643.

The Ordinance is prefixed to most editions of the Westminster Confession, and occurs in most collections of Scottish Subordinate Standards.

that it be taken away and such a government settled as would be most agreeable to God's word, most apt to procure and preserve the peace of the Church at home, and in nearer agreement with the Church of Scotland, and other Reformed Churches abroad. To give effect to this purpose the Ordinance named certain persons to constitute an Assembly with power and authority, 'to confer and treat among themselves of such matters and things, touching and concerning the liturgy, discipline, and government of the Church of England, for the vindicating and clearing of the doctrine of the same from all false aspersions and misconstructions, as shall be proposed unto them by both or either of the said Houses of Parliament, and no other; and deliver their opinion, advices of, or touching the matters aforesaid to both or either of the Houses, from time to time, in such manner and sort as by both or either of the said Houses of Parliament shall be required.' As the calling of the Assembly issued from the Lords and Commons assembled in Parliament, the Ordinance provided that 'the said Assembly shall be dissolved in such manner as by both Houses of Parliament shall be directed.'

Two things in this Ordinance of the English Parliament call for notice. First. There is the expression of a desire to bring the Church of England into closer agreement with the Church of Scotland. Knowing what they did, the English Lords and Commons could not do otherwise than express such a desire. For the Church of the

northern kingdom was not simply abreast of the Church of England, it was actually in advance in calling for such agreement and uniformity in all the Churches of the United Kingdom. About two years and a half before the calling of the Westminster Assembly a document was drawn up in Scotland to be laid before the English Lords of the Treaty at London. The missive taken by Scottish Commissioners to the metropolis has for title: 'Our Desires concerning Unity in Religion and Uniformity of Church Government as a special mean to conserve Peace in his Majesty's Dominions,' and in the body of the writing there is this explicit and emphatic avowal: 'It is to be wished that there were one Confession of Faith, one form of Catechism, one Directory for all the parts of the public worship of God . . . in all the Churches of his majesty's dominions.'¹ Then, in 1642 the Parliament of England sent a Declaration to the Scottish Assembly convened at St Andrews earnestly desiring 'a most firm and stable union between the two kingdoms of England and Scotland' in view of the prevailing distractions caused by the wicked practices of malignant Papists and ill-affected persons. In their answer to this communication the General Assembly refer to the paper of the Commissioners from Scotland in 1640, in which they expressed serious thoughts and earnest

¹ The paper is believed to have been written by Alexander Henderson towards the close of 1640. It is given at length in Dr Hetherington's *History of the Westminster Assembly of Divines*. Appendix, pp. 381-392. Williamson's Edition. 1890.

desires for unity in Confession, Directory, Catechism and Form of Church government, and conclude with the assurance that 'what may be required of the Kirk of Scotland, for furthering the work of uniformity of government, or for agreeing upon a common Confession of Faith, Catechism and Directory for worship shall, according to the order given by this Assembly, be most willingly performed.'¹ On the strength of these intimations and assurances the English Parliament commissioned certain noblemen and clergymen to resort in August 1643 to the Scottish Assembly then in session at Edinburgh, and to request the reverend Court to send to Westminster such godly and learned men as in their wisdom they thought most expedient for the furtherance of the work.² A few days later there came to Scotland a letter from the Assembly of Divines in the Kingdom of England addressed to 'the Right Reverend the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland,' expressing gratification at the prospect of some Scotsmen coming 'to put in their sickles into this harvest which is so great,' and assuring such fellow labourers of 'all testimonies of respect, love, and the right hand of fellowship.'³ Acting upon these fraternal overtures and invitations the General Assembly of 1643 nominated and elected five ministers of God's Word, and three ruling elders, 'with commission and power to

¹ *Acts of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, 1638-1843*, pp. 58-61. Church Law Society Edition.

² *Ibid.* pp. 77-78.

³ *Ibid.* pp. 83-85.

them or any three of them, whereof two shall be ministers, to repair unto the Assembly of Divines and others of the Church of England, now sitting at Westminster, to propound, consult, treat, and conclude with them . . . in all such things as may conduce to the utter extirpation of Popery, Prelacy, heresy, schism, superstition, and idolatry—and for the settling of the so much desired union of this whole island in one form of Church government, *one Confession of Faith*, one Common Catechism, and one Directory for the Worship of God.’¹ Of the eight Scottish Commissioners two—the Rev. Robert Douglas and the Earl of Cassills—never sat in the Assembly; of the six who put in an appearance the acting representatives, the constant Scottish quantity, were four famous Scottish divines—Alexander Henderson, Samuel Rutherford, Robert Baillie, and George Gillespie. The first and the last named joined the Assembly in September 1643, the other two in November of the same year. Being simply Commissioners from their National Church these men declined to sit as members of the English Assembly,

¹ *Acts of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland*, pp. 89-90, 90-92. ‘The Answer of the Generall Assembly of the Church of Scotland to the Declaration of the Honourable Houses of the Parliament of England’ is stated, by the editor of the *Acts*, to have been written by Alexander Henderson. ‘The Assemblies Answer to the Right Reverend the Assembly of Divines in the Church of England’ is attributed by the same authority to Mr Robert Blair. The names of the Scottish Commissioners are given in the first Answer in the following order and spelling: ‘Mr Alexander Henderson, Mr Robert Douglas, Mr Samuel Rutherford, Mr Robert Bailzie, Mr George Gillespie, ministers of God’s Word; and John Earle of Cassills, John Lord Maitland, and Sir Archibald Johnstoun of Waristoun, ruling elders.’

but claimed the right of sitting on all Committees—a right readily granted to them and fully exercised by them.

The other feature of the parliamentary Ordinance, creating the Westminster Assembly, which calls for remark, admits of being more briefly stated. The conception pervading the missive is that the Confession, when completed, is to be that of the Lords and Commons of England. It is expressly provided that the theologians are to be associated together with some members of both Houses of Parliament; that they are to consult and advise of such matters as shall be proposed unto them by the Lords and Commons, giving their advice and counsel therein when and as often as required; that the Assembly shall be dissolved when and how parliament directed; and that nothing be made public regarding the proceedings, by printing, writing, or otherwise, without the consent of either or both Houses. In the event of differences of opinion arising among the members which they could not overcome—a not improbable contingency in the case of a gathering made up of Presbyterians, Independents, Episcopalians, and Erastians—the disagreement and the reasons for it are to be reported to the legislative body for further direction.

These requirements of the Westminster Charter were carried out both in the letter and the spirit. Any one who reads the racy letters and journals of Baillie and the dry Minutes of the Sessions will soon gather that the English Parliament kept a firm hold

of the ecclesiastical convocation and carefully superintended its proceedings. In terms of Parliament's Ordinance the Assembly was, from first to last, an advisory body, whose function it was simply to consult and advise regarding matters laid before them. Little wonder that one Scottish Commissioner, with belief in the *jus divinum* of Presbytery strong within him, declared, 'This is no proper Assembly, but a meeting called by the Parliament to advise them in what things they are asked.'¹

The first business to which under instructions from Parliament the English members and Scotch commissioners addressed themselves was the revision of the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England. Ten weeks were spent in simplifying, clearing, and vindicating the doctrine contained in the Anglican symbol. Fifteen of the Articles had been debated, and some progress had been made in adjusting the sixteenth, when, in terms of an Order of the House, the work was laid aside, never afterwards to be resumed.² From matters doctrinal the Assembly proceeded, as directed, to debate and formulate matters ecclesiastical, handling questions bearing upon the nature of the Church, the offices of public

¹ Baillie's *Letters and Journals*, vol. ii. p. 186. The letter from which the quotation is taken was written to Baillie's cousin, William Spang. May 31, 1644.

² 'Westminster Assembly's Preface to the xxxix Articles.' *Minutes of the Sessions of the Westminster Assembly of Divines*. 1644-1649. Appendix No. 1. p. 541. The Articles revised by the Assembly are given in Hall's *Harmony of Protestant Confessions*, and in Neal's and Stoughton's *Histories*.

worship, the Scripture form of government, and the administration of discipline. Not till the autumn of 1644 were the busy members free to entertain the idea of framing an entirely new doctrinal symbol for the Churches of the United Kingdom; and not till the summer of the following year was the work actually undertaken. It is unnecessary to narrate the successive stages through which the formidable task passed from inception to completion. These are chronicled in the Parliamentary Journals and Assembly Minutes of the period, and are recounted with sufficient fulness in the pages of Lightfoot and Baillie, of Dr Hetherington and Professor Mitchell.

For our purpose it is enough to state that the preparation of the symbol occupied the time of the members, not without many interruptions, from July 7, 1645, to December 4, 1646. On the last named date the document, carefully transcribed by Dr Burgess the Assessor, was presented by the whole Assembly to the House of Commons, and, three days afterwards, to the House of Lords.¹ The form, how-

¹ 'Sess. 752.—December 4, 1646.—Friday morning. *Ordered*—That thanks be returned to the Assessor, Dr Burges, for his great pains in transcribing the Confession of Faith, which was done by the Prolocutor. *Resolved* upon the Q. This [*i.e.* the transcribed copy] shall be presented to both Houses of Parliament by the whole Assembly.' *Minutes, etc.*, pp. 308-9.

'The House [of Commons] being informed that the Divines of the Assembly were at the door; they were called in: and the Prolocutor informed the House that the Assembly of Divines had now finished the latter part of the Confession of Faith: which they desire humbly to present to the House: and for the more conveniency of the business they had reduced both parts likewise into one entire body.' *Journals of the House of Commons*. Vol. iv. p. 739.

ever, in which it was presented did not satisfy the English Commoners, who made an order that Scripture proofs should be added.¹ By the end of April 1647 the desideratum had been supplied and a committee of the Assembly laid before both Houses the Confession, with Scripture references inserted in the margin.² As the parliamentary Ordinance which brought them together and assigned them their work required the

‘This day [7th December, 1646] Mr Prolocutor with many others of the Assembly of Divines, presented the remainder of the Articles of the Confession of Faith . . . ; and because of the great concernment of it, they have likewise now brought it up in one entire body.’ *Journals of the House of Lords*. Vol. viii. p. 597.

¹ Writing to William Spang on Christmas Eve, 1646, Baillie informs his cousin :—‘Our Assemblée, with much adoe, at last have wrestled through the whole Confession, and all is now printed. The House of Commons requires to put Scripture to it before they take it to consideration ; and what time that will take up, who knows?’ *Letters and Journals*. Vol. ii. p. 415. Prof. Mitchell emphasises the fact that ‘the inserting of these proofs, which contributed so much to give the doctrinal standards of the Assembly such a firm hold on the minds of the lay members of the Church, was urged by the House of Commons,’ and that ‘the Order was complied with by the divines somewhat reluctantly.’ He prints, from a recently recovered volume of the records of the Commission of the General Assembly, a copy of their petition to the House of Commons on the subject. *Baird Lecture for 1882*, pp. 367-368 *n*. Prof. Warfield of Princeton takes the same view of the matter. ‘It was felt,’ he remarks, ‘that the demand for proof-texts was only an expedient of “the retarding party” in Parliament (as Baillie calls it) to delay the completion of the business: and it was feared that the attempt to add the texts would (as Baillie expressed it) “prove a very long business, if not dexterously managed,” though, no doubt, it would be “for the advantage and strength of the work.”’ *The Making of the Westminster Confession, and especially of its chapter on the Decree of God*. *The Presbyterian and Reformed Review*. April 1901, p. 247.

² Session 833. April 29, 1647. Dr Smith informed the Assembly that they had delivered the Confession of Faith with Scriptures, and the old Articles, to both Houses of Parliament ; and that the House of Commons had appointed the Assembly to print 600 copies of them both. *Minutes of Westminster Assembly*, p. 356.

members and commissioners to give their *advice*, the symbol which left the Jerusalem Chamber had for its earliest title: 'The Humble Advice of the Assembly of Divines, Now by authority of Parliament sitting at Westminster, concerning a Confession of Faith: With the Quotations and Texts of Scripture annexed.'¹ So soon as printed copies of the *Humble Advice* were in the hands of members the commoners of parliament resolved to consider its contents, the intention being to discuss a chapter every Wednesday. So slowly, however, did they proceed, and so many were the interruptions caused by negotiations with the King and disputes with the army that it was not till June 1648 that the symbol was published in London with the approval of the Lords and Commons of the Ordinance. The parliamentary title reads: 'Articles of Christian Religion approved and passed by both Houses of Parliament, after advice had with the Assembly of Divines, by authority of Parliament sitting at Westminster.'² A proposal was made that

¹ 'The humble Advice of the Assembly of Divines, Now by Authority of Parliament sitting at Westminster, Concerning a Confession of Faith, with the Quotations and Texts of Scripture annexed, Presented by them lately to both Houses of Parliament. A certain number of Copies are Ordered to be Printed only for the use of Members of both Houses and of the Assembly of Divines, to the end that they may advise thereupon. London, Printed for the Company of Stationers.' Copies of this edition are in the British Museum, and the Advocates' Library, Edinburgh. It may safely be said to have been issued in 1647. Prof. Mitchell's *Westminster Assembly*, pp. 367-8. Schaff's *Creeeds*, i. p. 753. 'The Printing of the Westminster Confession.' By Prof. B. B. Warfield, Princeton Seminary. *The Presbyterian and Reformed Review*. Oct. 1901, pp. 618-19.

² 'Articles of Christian Religion, Approved and Passed by both

the title be, 'A Confession of Faith'; but when a vote was taken the majority of members were found to favour the printed form, partly because the confessional formula, 'I believe,' or, 'I confess,' was wanting, and partly because the term Articles brought the new standard into line with the historical Thirty-nine which might now be regarded as superseded.¹ In its parliamentary form there are omitted from the symbol Chapter XXX.—'Of Church Censures,' and Chapter XXXI.—'Of Synods and Councils,' as also portions of those chapters which treat of 'Christian Liberty, and Liberty of Conscience,' of 'Marriage and Divorce,' and 'of the Civil Magistrate.' Subsequent parliamentary editions of the *Humble Advice* dropped the designation 'Articles,' and replaced omitted *paragraphs*, but the dropped *chapters* were never re-inserted, so that the Westminster Confession in its entirety never had the sanction of the English Parliament and never formed the creed of the English people.

In the Kingdom and Church of Scotland the acceptance of the new symbol was more immediate and more complete. Writing on Christmas Eve

Houses of Parliament, After Advice had with the Assembly of Divines, by Authority of Parliament sitting at Westminster. London : June 27, 1648.' Schaff, *ut sup.* Warfield, *ut sup.*, p. 621. Copies of this Edition are in the British Museum and Bodleian Libraries.

¹ 'They next considered of the title to be given to the book, and the question being propounded, that these words, A Confession of Faith, be in the question, the question was put whether this question shall be put; the House was divided . . . with the No, 61, with the Yes, 41. So that the question passed with the Negative.' *Minutes*, *ut sup.*, pp. 415-16.

1646, Commissioner Baillie was able to tell his correspondent, 'All is now printed,' so that he was able to carry up a copy of the book without the proofs and to present it to the Commission of the General Assembly at their meeting in January of the following year.¹ His fellow Commissioner, George Gillespie, followed him to Scotland, bringing with him specimens of the edition with proofs, and was there in time to admit of three hundred copies being issued for the use of members of Assembly which met at Edinburgh in August 1647. By the 27th of that month the Assembly was in a position to express 'Approbation of the Confession of Faith'—declaring that, 'a Confession of Faith agreed upon by the Assembly of Divines sitting at Westminster, with the assistance of Commissioners from the Kirk of Scotland,' having been twice publicly read over, examined and considered, the Assembly, after mature deliberation, agreed unto and approved of the said Confession 'as to the truth of the matter' (judging it to be most orthodox, and grounded upon the Word of God). The Assembly further expressed their willingness and desire that the symbol be 'a common Confession of Faith for the three kingdoms.'² The

¹ 'Our Assemblie, with much adoe, at last have wrestled through the whole Confession, and all is now printed.' *Letters and Journals*. Vol. ii. p. 415. 'The third point [of Uniformity], the Confession of Faith, I brought it with me, now in print, as it was offered to the Houses by the Assemblie, without considerable dissent of any. It's much cryed up by all, even many of our greatest opposites, as the best Confession yet extant.' Edinburgh, January 26th, 1647. *Ibid.* pp. 2-5.

² 'Sess. 23, August 27, 1647, *ante meridiem*.—Approbation of the Con-

better acquainted the Scottish Church became with it the greater became her appreciation of the new symbol. This is evidenced by an Act of Assembly passed in the summer of 1649—the year in which the first edition of the Confession and Catechisms was printed in Scotland with proofs. The Act ordained that ‘in every house where there is any who can read there be at least one copy of the Shorter and Larger Catechism, *Confession of Faith*, and Directory for Family Worship.’¹ It was only a few months earlier in the same year—two years after it had received ecclesiastical adoption—that the new Confession was ratified and approved by the Estates of the Scottish Parliament.² That Parliament, how-
 fession of Faith.’ *Acts of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. 1638-1842*, pp. 158-9. Usually prefixed to Scottish editions of the Westminster Confession.

¹ ‘Sess. 30, July 30, 1649, *ante meridiem*.—Act concerning Catechising.’ *Acts of Assembly, ut sup.*, p. 211.

‘The Confession of Faith, and the Larger and Shorter Catechisme,—First agreed upon by the Assembly of Divines at Westminster. And now appointed by the Generall Assembly of the Kirk of Scotland, to be a part of Uniformity in Religion between the Kirks of Christ in the three Kingdomes. Edinburgh, Printed by Gedeon Lithgow, Printer to the Universitie of Edinburgh, 1649.’ ‘This is the first edition with the proof references to the three documents . . . The Catechisms have distinct titles, but the pagination is continuous.’

The Shorter Catechism of the Westminster Assembly of Divines. Facsimile of First Edition. With Historical Account and Bibliography. By Wm. Carruthers, F.R.S., London, 1897, p. 40.

Also Professor Warfield’s Article, *ut sup.*, pp. 624-25.

² Charles I. Parl. 2, Sess. 2, Act 16. Act anent the Catechisms, Confession of Faith, and Ratification thereof. At Edinburgh, February 7, 1649. ‘The Estates of Parliament . . . having seriously considered the Catechisms, viz., the larger and Shorter ones, with the Confession of Faith, with three Acts of Approbation thereof by the Commissioners of the General Assembly . . . do ratify and approve the said Catechisms, Confession of Faith, and Acts of Approbation of the same, produced as

ever, was one of those whose Acts were rescinded in the reign of Charles II., and during the forty-three years which constituted the dark closing period of the Stewart dynasty the Westminster Confession was ignored by the government of the country. A curious result of this state of matters was that when, in the reign of Charles II., the Test Act of 1681 came to be drawn up and it was found necessary to define the true Protestant religion which all persons in trust were to own and profess, the framers of the document were forced to fall back upon the Old Scottish Confession of 1560. Along with an acknowledgment of the royal jurisdiction in matters ecclesiastical and a renunciation of the Covenants the candidate for office was required to declare: 'I own and sincerely profess the true Protestant religion, contained in the Confession of Faith, recorded in the first Parliament of King James VI., and I believe the same to be founded on and agreeable to the Word of God.'¹

it is; and ordains them to be recorded, published, and practised.' Generally prefixed to Scottish editions of the symbols.

¹ Act anent religion and the test, August 31st, 1681. . . . 'Therefore his majesty, from his princely and pious zeal to maintain and preserve the true protestant religion, contained in the confession of faith, recorded in the first parliament of King James VI., which is founded on, and agreeable to the written word of God.' The oath to be taken by all persons in public trust. 'I — solemnly swear, in presence of the eternal God, whom I invoke as judge and witness of my sincere intention in this my oath, that I own and sincerely profess the true protestant religion, contained in the Confession of Faith, recorded in the first parliament of king James VI. and that I believe the same to be founded on and agreeable to the written word of God: and I promise and swear that I shall adhere thereunto during all the days of my life-time, and shall endeavour to educate my children therein, and shall never consent to any change or alteration contrary thereunto ;

When, however, there came about the Revolution of 1688 and the settlement with which it was followed up, the Confession of 1560 was once more set aside in favour of that of 1647, the only Confession, if Bishop Burnet is to be credited, read in Scotland during the troubled years that followed the Restoration, and which the bishops left undisturbed in possession of the people, although destitute of legal sanction. Accordingly, when the Estates of Scotland which met immediately after the landing of William of Orange and which declared that religion, liberty and law are the dearest concerns of mankind, became a Parliament, there was passed an Act recognising the thirty-three chapters of the Westminster symbol as the public and avowed Confession of the Church of Scotland and as containing the sum and substance of the doctrine of the Reformed Churches.¹

II.

From sketching the construction and acceptance of the existing Creed of Presbyterian Scotland we pass to and that I disown and renounce all such principles, doctrines, or practices, whether popish or fanatical, which are contrary unto, and inconsistent with the said protestant religion, and Confession of Faith.' Wodrow's *History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland*. Book III. Ch. v. Sect. vi.

¹ Act Ratifying the Confession of Faith, and settling Presbyterian Church-Government. June 7, 1690. 'Our Sovereign Lord and Lady, the King and Queen's Majesties, and three Estates of Parliament . . . by these presents, ratify and establish the *Confession of Faith* now read in their presence, and voted and approven by them, as the public and avowed Confession of this Church, containing the sum and substance of the Doctrine of the Reformed Churches.' Tarbet's *Laws and Acts*, pp. 206, *et seq.* Generally prefixed to Scottish editions of the Confession.

a classification of the contents of the symbol drawn up and approved by Church and State.

It may seem a formidable undertaking to give a survey of such a wide field. But the formidableness is more apparent than real. For while the document consists of thirty-three chapters and these contain a hundred and seventy-one sections, some being of considerable length, the ordering of the successive chapters follows a manifest method, and the sections succeed each other in logical order.

The chapters take to do with seven departments of Divine Revelation which in the language of theologians are known as Bibliology ; Theology proper ; Anthropology ; Christology ; Soteriology ; Ecclesiology ; and Eschatology. Dispensing with the terms of the schools the same seven departments may be described by the simple vocables, Scripture ; God ; Man ; Christ ; Salvation ; The Church ; and The Last Things. As regards the ordering of the contents and the titles of the chapters the Westminster Confession bears no resemblance to the earlier symbols of the Continental Churches, to the purely Anglican Articles, or to the Scottish symbols. With all of these the framers of the Westminster document were familiar ; and it must have been of set purpose that they deviated from the old order and adopted another. Professor Mitchell of St Andrews, who has rendered such noble service to the theology and the literature of the Westminster period, has conclusively demonstrated that the order followed by the divines of the

Jerusalem Chamber is that of the Articles drawn up by Archbishop Ussher and adopted by the Protestant Church in Ireland in 1615. We shall have occasion to refer to these important theses at a later stage of our inquiry. In the present connection it is enough to note that, while there is in the two doctrinal statements such an amount of diversity as indicates independence and originality, there is such a measure of resemblance in order and titles, in phrases and *voces signatæ* as to evidence intentional similarity. From the very outset there is resemblance and difference. For, while the great majority of Reformed Confessions place the chapter on God before that on Scripture, the Irish Articles reverse the order, and the Westminster Confession does the same, indicating thereby that the Scriptures, not the doctrine of the Eternal Decree, is the point from which their theology was to be evolved. But while the earlier symbol gives to its first Article the title 'Of the Holy Scripture and the Three Creeds,' the later one contents itself with, 'Of the Holy Scripture.' Then the second Article of 1615 treats 'Of faith in the Holy Trinity'; the second chapter of 1647 treats 'Of God and of the Holy Trinity.' And the third of the Irish Articles is 'Of God's Eternal Decree and Predestination,' while the third chapter of the Scotch-English Confession is 'Of God's Eternal Decree.'¹

¹ The connection of the Westminster Confession and the Irish Articles is exhaustively treated by Professor Mitchell in Introduction to *Minutes of Westminster Assembly*, xlvi.-xlix. Also by Dr Schaff in *Creeds*, iii. pp. 760-65.

III.

The next subject which claims consideration is the school of symbolism to which the Westminster Confession belongs. Out of the spiritual life and theological activity of the Reformation movement there emerged several schools of Protestant symbols. There was that of the Lutheran Church, conspicuous amongst its Confessions being the Augsburg of 1530. There was also that of the Continental Reformed Churches, comprising the Churches of Switzerland, France, Belgium and Holland. And there was the school of the British Reformed Churches to the symbols of which Scotland contributed her Confession of 1560, England her Thirty-nine and Lambeth Articles of 1571 and 1595, while from Ireland there came the Articles formulated at Dublin in 1615. With some knowledge of the literature of these groups of Protestant manifestoes the majority of the 'learned and godly divines' who met within the precincts of Westminster may safely be credited. Evidence of acquaintance with what had been produced during the sixteenth century and in the opening decades of the seventeenth lies ready to hand in broad features of agreement and even in certain particulars of resemblance. But when we desire to go further, and, if possible, to discover the special school of symbolism to which the present Confession of the Church of Scotland belongs we must turn from Lutheran and Continental schools and betake ourselves to the

British group. There what we are in search of will not be found in Scotland's contribution to the school. For, however deeply the Scottish Commissioners may have left their individual mark upon the Westminster Standards, it is very certain their old national standard was not followed when the confessional portion of these standards was drawn up. The Scottish and Westminster Confessions stand apart from each other in respect of not only their ordering and titles, but also of their ground plan and structure. It has been pointed out by the greatest living authority upon *The Law of Creeds in Scotland* that the new creed occupies a different position from that of the old on such important matters as the doctrine of the visible Church, the province of the magistrate, the observance of the Lord's Day, and the function of Church rulers, the difference being in tone and sentiment as well as in mode of treatment and style of thought, and which is fitted to illustrate the lapse of the century between the standpoint of the Reforming and the Puritan age.¹

But in the Irish Articles, previously alluded to, we have what will be looked for in vain in Dutch, Genevan, or Scottish symbols—we have the main source of the Westminster Confession, and almost its exact prototype in the statement of all the more important and essential doctrines of Christianity.² This collection of nineteen doctrinal propositions, having

¹ A. Taylor Innes. *Law of Creeds in Scotland*. Chap. ii. pp. 64-65.

² Prof. Mitchell, *ut sup.* xlvii.

been adopted by the first Convocation of the Irish Protestant clergy held at Dublin in 1615, received the assent of the Lord Deputy in name of King James, and continued to be the subordinate Standard of the Irish Episcopal Church till 1635, when Archbishop Laud and the Earl of Strafford induced the Irish Convocation to adopt the Thirty-nine Articles 'for the manifestation of agreement with the Church of England in the confession of the same Christian faith and the doctrine of the sacraments.'¹ The name associated with the preparation of the Irish Articles is that of one of Ireland's most gifted sons and her greatest theologian—James Ussher, who, from being Professor of Divinity in Trinity College, Dublin, and thereafter Bishop of Meath, ultimately rose to the rank of a Privy Councillor and to the dignity of Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of all Ireland.² The main value of the Articles adopted by the Irish Church when they are regarded in relation to the general plan and the tenor of the more important chapters of the Westminster Confession, lies in this historical fact, that they were formulated before the Synod of Dort assembled (1618-1619) and before the Arminian controversy had become acute and embittered.

¹ Schaff's *Creeeds*, i. pp. 662-65.

² While the family spelling of the name is as above, and the Latin form of it is *Usserarius*, it is often spelled Usher. The founder of the family was an English Nevil, who is said to have taken the title because he had the honour of being *usher* to King John, *circa* 1185.

IV.

The inquiry regarding the particular type of doctrinal teaching which the existing Confession of the Church of Scotland exhibits leads us into an interesting field of historical investigation, to a rapid survey of which the concluding portion of this lecture must be devoted.

At the outset of the Reformation movement the theology of the British Churches assumed both a Lutheran and a Zwinglian character and colour. It was so in Scotland before John Knox became the dominant factor in the religious life of the country. Because of avowed sympathy with what the Scottish Parliament styled 'the damnable opinions of heresy spread by the heretic Luther' Patrick Hamilton left Scotland for Germany; and his *Places*, printed after intercourse with Luther and Melancthon at Wittemberg and with Lambert at Marburg, are resonant with that Evangelical ring so clear-sounding in the writings of the fatherland Reformers.¹ Then George Wishart visited the Reformed Churches of Switzerland when Henry Bullinger had taken the place of Zwingli; and during his sojourn in the Cantons he translated into Scottish vernacular the First Helvetic Confession

¹ 'Patrick's Places' are preserved entire by the English Martyrologist Fox in his *Acts and Monuments*. Townsend's edition, vol. iv. pp. 572-74. Also by John Knox in his *History*, Laing's edition, vol. i. Book i. pp. 19-35. For a discriminating estimate of the historical importance of the manifesto see *Precursors of Knox, or, Memoirs of Patrick Hamilton*. By Dr P. Lorimer, 1857, chap. v. pp. 96-98.

of 1536.¹ When the Second or Later Confession of Helvetia—the last and best of the Zwinglian family—was published at Zurich in 1566² Theodore Beza wrote John Knox requesting a judgment from the Church of Scotland upon this ‘Confession and simple Exposition of the orthodox faith and catholic doctrines of the pure Christian Religion.’ The request of the Genevan Reformer drew forth a response from a number of Superintendents, Professors and Ministers, convened at St Andrews, in which ‘the little book’ was spoken of in terms of warm approval as containing ‘what we have been constantly teaching these eight years, and still, by the grace of God, continue to teach in our Churches, in the schools, and in the pulpit.’³

¹ The Confession of Faith of the Churches of Switzerland ; Translated from the Latin, by George Wishart, 1536. This, the only extant literary production of the Scottish Martyr, was reprinted and edited by Dr David Laing in *The Miscellany of the Wodrow Society*, 1844. The second leaf of the original black letter contains the following title :— ‘This Confescion was fyrst wrytten and set out by the ministers of the Churche and Congregation of Sweuerland [Switzerland] where all godlyness is receyued and the worde had in most reuerence and from thence was sent unto the Emperours maiestie then holdynge a gryat counsell or parliamēt in the yeare of our Lord God M.d.C. xxxvii. in the moneth of February. Translated out of laten by George Wsher, a Scotchman who was burned in Scotland the yeare of oure lorde M.d.C. xlvi.’ Dr Laing was of opinion that the volume containing the Confession and other two tracts was printed at London by Thomas Raynalde, about the year 1548.

The Confession in Latin and High-German will be found in Schaff's *Creeds*. Vol. iii. pp. 211-231.

² *Confessio Helvetica Posterior*, A.D. 1566. Written by Henry Bullinger, of Zürich, Zwinglis successor ; first published in Latin, also in German and French. Schaff's *Creeds*. Vol. iii. pp. 233-306.

³ *Zurich Letters*, Parker Society, 1842. Laing's *Knox*. Vol. vi. pp. 544-550. The Confession having been translated by Robert Pont, the

Across the border there was substantially the same state of matters as in Scotland. As early as 1527 the writings of Luther were so widely circulated and eagerly read that continental divines of the period styled the Church of England a Lutheran Church. Philip Melancthon was invited to assist in reforming the Anglican Church, and to occupy a Professor's chair in Cambridge; and although he never visited England, the influence of his teaching, as embodied in the Augsburg Confession of 1530 and in his *Loci Communes*, can be traced in the writings of Cranmer and in the forty-two Articles of Religion formulated by that divine and published in 1553. On the other hand, Bullinger of Zurich, to whom the Swiss Churches General Assembly, which met at Edinburgh on the 25th day of December, 'ordained the same to be printed, together with an epistle sent by the Assembly of the Kirk of Scotland, approving the same, providing a note be put in the margin, where mention is made of the remembrance of some holy days.' *B.U.K.S.* Vol. i. p. 90.

'The Churches of Helvetia, Geneva, and other Reformed Churches in France and Germany, sent unto the Church of Scotland the sum or Confession of Faith, desiring to know if wee agree in uniformity of doctrine. Wherefore the Superintendents, together with many other most qualified ministers, convene in September [1566] at Santandrews, and having read the Letters and Confession, sent answer, that wee agree in all points with these Churches, and differ in nothing from them, except that wee assent not in keeping festival days, seeing the Sabbath-day only is kept in Scotland.' Petrie's *History of the Catholic Church*. Part ii. p. 347, Rotterdam, 1662. See also Calderwood's *History*. Vol. ii. pp. 333. Wodrow's *Miscellany* [4]. The part of the Confession objected to by the Scottish divines is in Chap. xxiv. *De Feriis, Jejuniis, Ciborumque Delectu*, in which it is said:—'If Congregations in addition Commemorate the Lord's nativity, Circumcision, resurrection, and ascension, and the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, we greatly approve of it. But feasts instituted by men in honour of saints we reject, though the memory of the saint is profitable, and should be commended to the people with exhortations to follow their virtues.' *Schaff's Creeds*. Vol. i. p. 417. Vol. iii. p. 298.

were indebted for the Second Helvetic Confession, was well known to the early Reformation divines of England and exercised considerable influence upon the Anglican theology of the period; so much so indeed that in the opinion of Principal William Cunningham, the greatest Calvinist of last century, the influence of this Zwinglian theologian upon the English Reformers exceeded that of either Melancthon or Calvin.¹

As time went on, however, the influence of the last named master-spirit became dominant both in England and Scotland, and by 1643 the confessional theology of Great Britain was distinctively Augustinian or Calvinistic. The formative principle, the ruling truth of Calvinism is the Sovereignty of God; and it is this principle or truth that gives distinctive character to the theology of the Westminster Confession of Faith. Articulate expression is given to this Divine Sovereignty in such statements concerning God as declare Him to be 'most absolute, working all things

¹'Bullinger was a Calvinist, though a very cautious and moderate one, shrinking from some of the more precise and stringent statements of Calvin on particular points. He became more decided and outspoken in maintaining Calvinistic principles as he advanced in life, and as some indications appeared of differences among Protestants themselves of deviations tending in an anti-Calvinistic direction. We believe that Bullinger had more influence with the English Reformers, and upon the reformation they effected, than either Melancthon on the one side or Calvin on the other; and whether it was because of influence exerted by him or not, the actual theological views adopted by Cranmer and embodied in the Articles, more nearly resembled, in point of fact, the opinions of Bullinger than those of any other eminent man of the period.' *The Reformers and The Theology of the Reformation.* Essay iv Melancthon and the Theology of the Church of England, p. 190.

according to the counsel of his own immutable and most righteous will, for his own glory,' 'the alone fountain of all being, of whom, through whom, and to whom, are all things,' with 'most sovereign dominion over them [creatures which he hath made], to do by them, for them, or upon them, whatsoever himself pleaseth,' and to whom 'is due from angels and men, and every other creature, whatsoever worship, service, or obedience, he is pleased to require of them.'¹ It is affirmed in the chapter which treats 'of God's Eternal Decree'—'God from all eternity did, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass.'² And with equal clearness it is asserted in that part of the symbol devoted to the doctrine of Providence, the opening paragraph of which declares, 'God, the great Creator of all things, doth uphold, direct, dispose, and govern all creatures, actions, and things, from the greatest even to the least, by his most wise and holy providence, according to his infallible foreknowledge, and the free and immutable counsel of his own will, to the praise of the glory of his wisdom, power, justice, goodness, and mercy.'³

There is a *vox signata* of the symbol the occurrence and recurrence of which have a significant bearing upon the place of the Divine Sovereignty in Westminster theology. There is a constant reference to

¹ Westminster *Confession of Faith*. Chap. II.—Of God, and of the Holy Trinity, i. ii.

² *Ibid.* Chap. III. i.

³ *Ibid.* Chap. V. i.

the Divine pleasure, and a tracing up of things as regards ultimate explanation to the good pleasure of God. The *raison d'être* of three great Divine manifestations—Creation, Revelation, Redemption—is given in the simple formula, ‘It pleased God.’ ‘It pleased God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost . . . to create, or make of nothing, the world’:¹ ‘It pleased the Lord . . . to reveal himself, and to declare that his will unto his church:’² ‘It pleased God, in his eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus, his only begotten Son, to be the Mediator between God and man.’³ Further, when what is termed the ‘high mystery of predestination’ is handled ‘with special prudence and care,’ the predestinated unto life are described as ‘chosen in Christ, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to God’s eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of his will,’ while ‘the rest of mankind God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will, whereby he extendeth or withholdeth mercy as he pleaseth, for the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures, to pass by.’⁴ In the matters of man’s Fall and God’s federal dealings with him prior and subsequent thereto, the Divine, sovereign pleasure has an over-ruling and determining place assigned to it. For, the sin of our first parents ‘God was pleased, according to his wise and holy counsel, to permit having

¹ *Ibid.* Chap. IV. i.

² *Ibid.* Chap. I. i

³ *Ibid.* Chap. VIII.—Of Christ the Mediator, i.

⁴ *Ibid.* Chap. III. v. vii.

purposed to order it to his own glory.'¹ But before and independent of that sin, as human beings, in consequence of the distance between God and the creature, 'could never have any fruition of him as their blessedness and reward, but by some voluntary condescension on God's part' it has pleased God to express this condescension 'by way of covenant.' And, thereafter, when, by his fall, man had made himself incapable of life by that covenant 'the Lord was pleased to make a second, commonly called the Covenant of Grace.'² Finally, in Vocation or Effectual Calling, 'all those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only, he is pleased, in his appointed and accepted time, effectually to call, by his word and Spirit'; and the good works of all such are accepted in Christ because looking upon them in his Son, God 'is pleased to accept and reward that which is sincere, although accompanied with many weaknesses and imperfections.'³

These copious extracts from the symbol they drew up may suffice to show that the Westminster Creed makers grounded their confessional structure upon the Sovereignty of God, being profoundly convinced that, to use their own language, 'the light of nature sheweth that there is a God, who hath lordship and sovereignty over all.'⁴ In so doing they were Calvinists, and were in harmony with the divines

¹ *Ibid.* Chap. VI. i.

² *Ibid.* Chap. VII. i. iii.

³ *Ibid.* Chap. X. 1. Chap. XVI. vi.

⁴ *Ibid.* Chap. XXI.—Of Religious Worship, and the Sabbath-day, i.

of all the Evangelical Reformed Churches. Their contribution to the Creeds of Christendom will ever rank in the judgment of those who have competent intelligence and information as not only the best and fullest expression of the Reformed system, but as 'the ablest and ripest product of the great Reformation which was so fruitful in symbolical literature.'¹

¹ Henry Boynton Smith's *Faith and Philosophy*, pp. 103, 147, 283. When quoting the above appreciation Prof. B. B. Warfield makes the following remarks:—'through them [the English, Lambeth and Irish Articles] it [the Westminster Confession] goes back respectively to the thought especially of Peter Martyr and of John Calvin. There is nothing in it which is not to be found expressly set forth in the writings of these two great teachers: and it gives their teachings form under the guidance of the best Confessional statements precedent to its own origin.' *The Presbyterian and Reformed Review*. January, 1901.

LECTURE III.

WESTMINSTER TEACHING IN THE LIGHT OF FEDERALISM, MYSTICISM, AND UNIVERSALISM.

EVERY Confession of revealed truth and of the Church's faith is not only a product of the age in which it was written, it is also a creation of the religious life and thought of that age. In other words, every confession is historical. It has its own historical antecedents, its own historical atmosphere, environments, and limitations.

For example, to go as far back in creed making as it is safe to go, the original Nicene Creed of 325 bears the distinct impress of that struggle between the orthodox faith and the Arian heresy which agitated Christendom in the fourth century. Such phrases as, 'begotten of the Father before all worlds, very God of very God, being of one substance with the Father' are so many epitomes of the controversy concerning our Lord's Divinity, so many confessional embodiments of the faith to which the Church attained at the first œcumenical Council held at Nicæa. Then, the greatest schism in the ancient Church took place when the Eastern and Western Churches parted asunder on the doctrine of the Spirit. The Greek Church maintained the single Procession from the

Father alone, the Latin taught the double Procession from the Father and the Son, as a consequence of the co-equality of the second with the first Person of the Trinity. That gave rise and character to the later reconstructed creed of Nicæa, with its little but significant word *Filioque*, which was gradually adopted in the Latin Church and ultimately passed into the symbolic and service-books of Protestant Churches.¹

Coming down to the confessions of the Reformed Churches in Great Britain, it goes without saying that the Westminster Confession is historical. It is so in its inception and in its construction. For a right understanding of certain of its chapters there is required some knowledge of that controversy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in which Calvinism was pitted against Arminianism, and which the National Synod of Dort was convened to terminate when the Five Articles of the Remonstrant Arminians were rejected and the Five Calvinistic Canons were adopted.

To a still greater extent an intelligent appreciation of the Westminster symbol calls for some acquaintance with the Puritanism of Great Britain in its conflict with Roman Catholicism and High Churchism, that movement which Thomas Fuller wittily and pithily describes as 'conceived in the days of King Edward, born in the reign of Queen Mary (but beyond the sea,

¹ It is the third and last form of the Nicene Creed which occurs in the Order for Holy Communion in the Anglican Book of Common Prayer.

at Frankfort-on-the-Main), nursed and weaned in the reign of Elizabeth, grew up a youth or tall stripling under King James, and shot up under Charles I. to the full strength and stature of a man.'

While the Westminster symbol, as an historical document, registers the religious life and thought of its age, the human mind has gone on thinking, investigating, speculating in many directions. The product of this activity may be in open contradiction of the conclusions reached by the divines of the seventeenth century; it may, on the other hand, be capable of being brought into a wonderful measure of harmony with these conclusions. But it is hardly conceivable that, in any case, the mental activity of two centuries should leave the teaching of the Jerusalem Chamber absolutely unaffected, unmodified. The natural, the inevitable result of what has been going on since the Westminster Confession was written is to raise such questions as stand associated with altered subscription, modification, revision, reconstruction. It will place us in a better position to answer these questions, when they come to be handled, if we devote some attention to the leading movements in life and thought which are subsequent to the period of the Westminster Assembly.

I. FEDERALISM.

In at least one matter the compilers of the Westminster symbol made a departure from, if not an

advance upon all the previous creeds of Christendom. They represented the dealings of God with man in nature and in grace under the designation of Covenants. Immediately after the chapter which treats 'Of the Fall of Man, Of Sin and of the Punishment thereof,' there follows one in which there is a setting forth 'Of God's Covenant with Man.'¹ In this chapter the divine covenants are stated to be two in number. The first 'was a covenant of works, wherein life was promised to Adam, and in him to his posterity, upon condition of perfect and personal obedience'; in the second, 'commonly called the Covenant of Grace,' God 'freely offereth unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring of them faith in him, that they may be saved.' At a later stage the opening paragraph of the chapter—'Of the Law of God'—is in these words: 'God gave to Adam a law, as a covenant of works, by which he bound him, and all his posterity, to personal, entire, exact, and perpetual obedience; promised life upon the fulfilling, and threatened death upon the breach of it.'²

Now the covenant or federal scheme of theology had no place in the œcumenical creeds, nor in the confessions of the Roman, the Lutheran, or the Continental Reformed Churches. It does not appear in any of the early formularies of the Church of England from 1536 to 1571; it does not influence the Scottish symbols from 1560 to 1616; and there is only an

¹ Chap. VII. i. ii. iii.

² Chap. XIX. i.

incidental reference to it in the Irish Articles of 1615.¹

While there is a marked absence of federalism in the symbols and the Churches up to the time of the Westminster Assembly, that method of construing the divine relations and dealings as revealed in Scripture had undoubtedly taken hold of the theological mind before the 'learned, godly, and judicious Divines' of that convocation began their work of creed construction. Among Continental theologians Henry Bullinger made use of the federal scheme in his writings,² and his example was followed by Peter Martyr when lecturing at Oxford on the Epistle to the Romans, by Martin Bucer at Cambridge, and by John Alasco at London. Then, the earlier English Puritans gave a place to federalism in their preaching and their

¹ 'Man being at the beginning created according to the image of God . . . had *the covenant of the law* ingrafted in his heart, whereby God did promise unto him everlasting life upon condition that he performed entire and perfect obedience unto his commandments, according to that measure of strength wherewith he was endued in his creation, and threatened death unto him if he did not perform the same.' Of the Creation and Government of all things. Schaff's *Creeeds*, vol. iii. p. 530.

² *De Testamento seu Fœdere Dei unico et eterno*, 1534. 'This,' says Professor Mitchell, 'was two years before Calvin had given to the world, even in its most rudimentary form, his immortal *Institutes*, and from that date onwards the Reformed Church may be said to have had from one of its most trusted leaders, though in brief form, a pretty definite account of God's gracious dealings with our race under the form of a covenant of grace, and, at the same time, a pretty distinct statement of its important place in the system of revealed truth—containing the germ, in fact, of our Protestant historical theology.' Paper on 'The Theology of the Reformed Church with special reference to the Westminster Standards.' *Report of Proceedings of the Second General Council of the Presbyterian Alliance*, 1880, p. 477.

writings. Two contemporary Nonconformists—John Preston of Cambridge and John Ball of Oxford—wrote treatises on the Covenant of Grace.¹ The work of the latter was not published till 1645—four years after his death—and in that same year there was published in London a book which had a larger circulation and exercised a much greater influence upon the religious life of Great Britain than anything that came from the pen either of Preston or of Ball. This was *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*. On its title-page this epoch-marking, if not epoch-making, work purports to be ‘Touching both the Covenant of Works, and the Covenant of Grace: with their use and end, both in the time of the Old Testament, and in the time of the New’; and when the Scottish editors of the English book distributed the contents of the first part into chapters they gave to the first the title, ‘Of the Law or Covenant of Works,’ to the second that of ‘The Law of Faith, or Covenant of Grace,’ and to the third ‘Of the Law of Christ.’²

It was, however, after, and not before the Westminster Assembly had finished its labours that federalism received its greatest elaboration from Dutch, English and Scottish theologians. On the Continent John Cocceius, the pupil of the English Puritan Ames, and Professor in the University of

¹ Preston’s *Treatise on the New Covenant; or, the Saint’s Portion* was published in 1629; John Ball’s *Treatise of the Covenant of Grace* in 1645.

² *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*. In Two Parts. 1645, 1649. By E. F. Edited, with Introduction, Notes, and an Appendix, Biographical and Bibliographical, by C. G. M’Crie, D.D. 1902.

Leyden, arranged an entire system of divinity on federal lines, in a work which was not published till 1648, the year following that in which the Westminster Confession received the approval of the Church of Scotland¹; and Herman Witsius, the learned Dutch Professor, is best known to modern students of Divinity by his work on *The Economy of the Covenants between God and Man : comprehending a complete body of Divinity*.²

With the English puritans of the seventeenth century federalism was in general favour and use, and by them also it was carried much further than by the authors of the Westminster Confession. For in their evolution of it a third covenant appears, or rather, the Covenant of Grace is broken up into two. There is the Covenant of Redemption, made between God the Father and Christ the Son in the councils of eternity ; and there is the Covenant of Grace entered into by God and a sinner in time. That view of the economy of redemption is forcibly presented in Stephen Charnock's *Discourse of God's being the author of Reconciliation*,³ and in John Owen's controversial treatise, *Salus Electorum, Sanguis Jesu ; or, the Death of Death in the Death of Christ*.⁴

It was in Scotland, however, that the federal

¹ *Summa Doctrinæ de Fœdere et Testamenti Dei Explicata.* 1654.

² *The Economy of the Covenants between God and Man : comprehending A Complete Body of Divinity.* By Herman Witsius, D.D. Utrecht, 1693. Faithfully translated from the Latin and carefully revised by William Crookshank, D.D. London, 1822.

³ Nichol's Edition of the Puritans, vol. iii. p. 371, *et seq.*

⁴ Goold's Edition, vol. x. p. 168, *et seq.*

scheme of revealed truth was carried furthest and presented in the most developed form. In 1650 there was printed at Edinburgh an edition of the Confession and Catechisms in which there appeared for the first time a treatise having for title, *The Sum of saving knowledge: or, a brief sum of Christian Doctrine, together with the practical Use thereof*.¹ This compendium never received the formal sanction of the Church of Scotland, but it became a well-nigh constant accompaniment of the Westminster documents in Scottish editions. Wodrow, the historian, declares it to have been the joint-composition of David Dickson, minister at Irvine, and thereafter Professor at Glasgow University, and of James Durham, minister of the Inner Kirk, Glasgow, and

¹ 'The Confession of Faith, and the Larger and Shorter Catechisme, First agreed upon by the Assembly of Divines at Westminster. And now approved by the Generall Assembly of the Kirk of Scotland, to be a part of Uniformity in Religion between the Kirks of Christ in the three Kingdomes. Edinburgh, Printed by Gideon Lithgow, Printer to the University of Edinburgh, 1650.' The Confession and Catechisms are provided with distinct titles, but are paged continuously. At the end, occupying sixty-six unnumbered pages, comes what has for title-page:—'A Brief Sum of Christian Doctrine, and the Practical Use thereof, contained in Holy Scripture, and holden forth in the Confession of Faith and Catechisms. Agreed upon by the Assembly of Divines at Westminster, and received by the General Assembly of the Kirk of Scotland.' The error in the punctuation of the above, which makes the *Sum* to be a product of the Westminster Assembly, was repeated in subsequent editions till 1744, when the period after 'Catechisms' was changed into a comma. Subsequent to 1650 nearly all Scottish editions of the Confession include the *Sum*, which does not appear to have ever been issued as a separate publication. Carruthers's *Facsimile Shorter Catechism*, pp. 41-42.

Prof. Warfield's *Pointing of the Westminster Confession*. *Presbyterian and Reformed Review*, Oct. 1901, pp. 626-27.

Dr D. Hay Fleming in *D^o*. x. 318-24.

author of *The Dying Man's Testament, or, a Treatise Concerning Scandal*.¹ A work which the saintly M'Cheyne regarded as the means of bringing about in him a saving change may well be read with interest, and ought to be handled with respect.² At the same time, it will readily be admitted that federalism, as developed in the *Sum*, is objectionable in form and in application. Detailed descriptions of redemption as a bargain entered into between the First and the Second Persons of the Trinity, in which conditions were laid down, promises held out, and pledges given; the reducing of salvation to a mercantile arrangement between God and the sinner, in which the latter signifies contentment to enter into covenant, and the former intimates agreement to entertain a relation of grace, so that ever after the contented, contracting party can say, 'Lord, let it be a bargain,'—such presentations have obviously a tendency to reduce the gospel of the grace of God to the level of a legal compact entered into between two independent and, so far as right or status is concerned, two equal parties. The blessedness of the mercy-seat is in danger of being lost sight of in the bargaining of the market-place; the simple story of salvation is thrown

¹ 'He [Mr David Dickson] and Mr James Durham dreu up The Summ of Saving Knowledge, in some afternoons when they went out to the Craigs of Glasgou to take the air, because they thought the Catechisme too large and dark; (and if I be not forgot, my informer, Mr P. S. [Patrick Simson] was their amanuensis,) and the application was the substance of some sermons Mr Dickson preached at Inneraray, written out at the desire of my Lady Argyle.' *Analecta*, vol. i. p. 166.

² Diary in *Memoir*, March 11, 1834.

into the crucible of the logic of the schools and it emerges in the form of a syllogism.

II. MYSTICISM.

Happily for Scotland alongside of the development of federalism there has flowed a stream of tendency of a very different nature, the warmth, the sweetness, and the music of which have entered into the religious life of the nation. The work which most effectively introduced religious subjectivism into Scotland is that which is most widely, although not most accurately known under the title of, *The Imitation of Christ*.¹ This classic in devotional literature, next to the Bible in diffusion, and the translations of which are past all counting, is pervadingly subjective in the instruction it communicates and the piety it inculcates. The graces upon which most store is set are Simplicity, Purity, Compunction, Humility, Contempt not only of the world but of self. From external written revelation the attention of the student is constantly directed to what is internal—the Inner Life, the Inner Light, the Inner Communion and Consolation, the

¹ The author of the four treatises which make up the book gave to them no name. The best known title—*De Imitatione Christi*—properly belongs to the first only, and indeed only to the opening chapter of that treatise which has for title, *De Imitatione Christi et contemptu omnium vanitatum mundi*. The Imitation of Christ did not become the title of the whole book till the appearance of the Nuremberg edition in 1494. Earlier titles, found in MSS., are, *De Reformatione Hominis*, *De Musica Ecclesiastica*. See 'The Imitation of Christ called also The Ecclesiastical Music. A revised Translation, Notes and Introduction by C. Bigg, D.D.' 1898.

Inner Affections and Activities. At what precise date the *Imitation* found its way into Scotland we have no means of determining. It was certainly circulating there in the opening of the seventeenth century. A copy, of beautiful typography, printed at Cologne in 1564, was in the study of Leighton when, from 1641 to 1653, he prepared for the pulpit of Newbattle what the world now has in the form of his *Practical Commentary upon the First Epistle of Peter*.¹ We associate the appearance of subjective or mystical theology in Scotland with the life and writings of the author of that Commentary. After he ceased to be a presbyterian minister and before he became a Scottish prelate Robert Leighton was, for nine years, Principal of Edinburgh College. During that period of his life, probably the least troubled that fell to his lot, certainly happier than that which succeeded it, the Primarius Professor of Divinity delivered in the public hall of the University *Meditations* critical and practical on certain of the Psalms, *Theological Lectures*, of which twenty-four have come down to us, *Exhorta-*

¹ 'He [Leighton] has written on the fly-leaf of his *De Imitando Christo*, a beautiful book printed by Arnold Birkman at Cologne, 1564, the following happy words from Augustine, which, we may be sure, he translated into fact in his Newbattle study: '*Oratio postulet, lectio inquirat, meditatio inveniat, contemplatio degustet et digerat.*' *Archbishop Leighton, a short Biography with Selections from his Writings*, by W. Blair, D.D., p. 116. 'Besides many valuable editions of the Classical and Patristic writers, which can only now be had in very old Libraries, the following books may be given as affording a general idea of the whole:—Kempis, Thomas à, *Opera Omnia* (3 vols.), *De Imitatione* (4 editions of). *The Life and Letters of Robert Leighton*. By the Rev. D. Butler, M.A. F.R.S.E., 1903. Appendix B. [The Leightonian Library at Dunblane], p. 591.

tions to the candidates for laureation, an *Address* after the vacation, and a *Farewell*, on leaving the University to become Bishop of Dunblane. In addition to these compositions intended for general use and publicly delivered there is a tract or manual to which, in MS. form the title is given: 'Some Rules and Instructions for Devout Exercises, written by the Reverend Bishop Leighton, with his own hand, and found amongst his papers after his decease,' but which his editors and biographers style: 'Counsels of Perfection; or, Rules and Instructions for spiritual exercise.'

There is nothing in the contents to give a clue to the date of the last-named unique production of sanctified genius, which was drawn up for the writer's own use and for that of private friends and like-minded disciples. But both Mr West-Leighton's erudite and painstaking editor, and Mr Butler, his most recent and sympathetic biographer, associate the *Spiritual Exercises* with the time of the Edinburgh principalship, the latter surmising that they may have been put together after one of the Scotsman's visits, in the College vacation, to the Port Royal.¹ In all Leighton's writings, but

¹ *Lectures and Addresses*, edited by William West, M.A., 1870, pp. 303-31. 'And so we may well think of this Mystical Tract of his as written after one of his visits in the College vacation to the Port Royal, and as manifesting the manner in which he sought to influence his students, as well as direct his own devotions. This Tract, too, renders intelligible the stories regarding his ascetical habits and long hours of retirement that were current about him during the time of his Principalship and that must have made him so unintelligible to the eager Protestors of his time.' Butler, *ut sup.* pp. 278-79.

very specially in those just specified, the note of Inwardness is pervading, dominating. The keynote of the academic Exhortations and the individual Exercises is struck in the old formula of mystic piety—Purification, Illumination, Union, the three great stages of human perfection and saintly bliss. What could be more of the spirit and after the manner of continental mystics than to assure a man, ‘the more perfectly thou livest in the abstraction and departure and bare nakedness of thy mind from all creatures, the more nakedly and purely shalt thou have the fruition of the Lord thy God, and shalt live the more heavenly and angelical a life?’¹ What stronger call could there be to cultivate the habit of Inwardness than this, ‘Wherever thou be, let this voice of God be still in thine ear: My son, return inwardly to thy heart, abstract thyself from all things, and mind Me only. . . . Thus, with a pure mind in God, clean and bare from the memory of all things, remaining unmoving in Him, thou shalt think and desire nothing else in the world but He and thou alone together; that all thy mights and powers being thus collected into God, thou mayest become one spirit with Him.’² What Scottish theologian of an earlier period and of the federal school would have thought of encouraging himself and advising others to ascend and come to the Lord God by climbing up ‘by the wounds of His blessed humanity, that remain, as it were, for that use. . . . Entering into Jesus, thou castest thyself

¹ *Lectures and Addresses, ut sup.* p. 324.

² *Ibid.* p. 329.

into an infinite Sea of Goodness, that more easily drowns and swallows thee up than the ocean does a drop of water. Then shalt thou be hid in and transformed into Him, and shalt often be as thinking without thought, and knowing without knowledge, and loving without love, comprehended of Him whom thou canst not comprehend.'¹

A distinctive feature of Scottish Subjectivism, as Leighton founded and formulated it, is the place given in it to human Happiness, Felicity, Blessedness. God is completely happy in Himself from all eternity; is His own happiness. He is perfectly happy and glorious in the sole enjoyment of His own infinite perfections, throughout the countless ages of eternity, without angels, or men, or any other creature.² And the highest end of rational creatures is that perfect good which constitutes happiness in its fullest and highest sense, and which is suited to an intelligent nature. Theology, briefly and clearly defined, is a Divine doctrine, directing man to true happiness as his chief end and conducting him to it by the way of true religion. But this Felicity, which is the quest of all, cannot be found within this visible world, in this earthly life. The only sure way to attain to it is that provided in the Christian religion, so that happiness comes to be identical with Salvation. 'The way to happiness is *true religion*, and the only true religion is Christianity. So long as Christians are in 'these dark cottages of clay' their Felicity is imperfect and

¹ *Lectures and Addresses, ut sup.* p. 327.

Ibid. pp. 89-90.

interrupted, but they are making for and ever getting nearer to 'that boundless ocean of happiness, which results from the BEATIFIC VISION of the ever-blessed God,' which includes in it not only a distinct and intuitive knowledge of God, but, so to speak, such a knowledge as gives us the enjoyment of that most perfect Being, and, in some sense, unites us to Him.¹

In thus giving a primary and prominent place to Felicity in his theology Leighton was not making a new departure. He was simply falling back upon Reformation theology as expressed in the Catechisms of both the Continental and the Scottish Reformation. For in the Catechism 'made by the excellent Doctor and Pastor in Christ's Church, John Calvin,' and of which the First Book of Discipline enjoined the use 'Every Sunday,' the first question, 'What is the principal and chief end of man's life?' with its answer, 'To know God,' is immediately followed up with the enquiry, 'What is then the chief felicity of man?' and the reply is, 'To know God, and to have his glory showed forth in us.'² In the Palatine or Heidelberg Catechism which was translated into English in 1591 and printed 'for the use of the Kirk of Scotland,' the opening question is, 'What is thy only Comfort in Life and in Death?' and the second is, 'How many things are needful for thee to know, to the end thou, enjoying this Comfort, mayst live and die an happy

¹ *Lectures and Addresses, ut sup.* pp. 95, 111, 114, 115.

² Dunlop's *Collection*, vol. ii. pp. 139-248. Bonar's *Catechisms of the Scottish Reformation*, pp. 1-92.

man?'¹ Leighton expressly refers to the foregoing in the Heidelberg Catechism in his Lecture 'Of the Christian Religion, and that it is the true way to Happiness,' quoting the first question, and follows up the reference with another to Principal Adamson's Catechism, which was printed at Edinburgh in 1627, which he states was not long ago used in Edinburgh University, and of which the first question is, 'Which is the only way to true happiness?'²

The best-known of Leighton's theological friends and followers was Henry Scougal. With the exception of twelve months' pulpit and pastoral labour as a parish minister all Scougal's professional work was done in the University of King's College, Old Aberdeen, where he was successively Regent, Professor of Philosophy, and Professor of Divinity. The life of the Aberdeen divine was a brief one. He had scarcely completed his twenty-eighth year when he died, on the 13th of June 1678. Sometime after his death there were published Nine Sermons, a brief series of Private Reflections and Occasional Meditations, together with some Essays, Moral and Divine. In a local *History of Old Aberdeen* there has been preserved a small collection of Prayers for the Morning and Evening Service of the Cathedral Church of Aberdeen, composed by Mr Henry Scougal.³

¹ Dunlop. *Ibid.* pp. 273-352. Bonar. *Ibid.* pp. 113-162.

² *Lectures and Addresses, ut sup.* p. 213.

³ *The Morning and Evening Service of the Cathedral Church of Aberdeen, composed by Mr Henry Scougal, Professor of Theology in the King's College in Old Aberdeen.* The Prayers have been reprinted in a neat edition

But the work of Scougal through which he has influenced religious life and experience from his day to ours was published in his lifetime under the title: *The Life of God in the Soul of Man; Or the Nature and Excellency of the Christian Religion*.¹ The close affinity of spirit and of teaching in the case of Leighton and Scougal is borne witness to in the Latin quotation placed by the latter on the title-page of his treatise—*Perfectionis ac felicitatis summum est uniri Deo*. The work itself purports to have been drawn up for the advancing in virtue and holiness of a dear friend whose name is not disclosed. It is broken up into three parts, each of which closes with a prayer. In the first part, after showing that Religion does not consist of orthodox notions and opinions held by the understanding, nor in the performance of the duties of good conduct, nor in rapturous heats and ecstatic devotion of the affections, Scougal defines true religion to be ‘an union of the soul with God, a real participation of the divine nature, the very image of God drawn upon the soul, or, in the apostle’s phrase, it is of Scougal’s principal work mentioned in next note, with an Account of the Life and Writings of the Author by Prof. James Cooper, D.D., Glasgow. Aberdeen, 1892.

¹ The first edition was published in London in 1677. In 1765 was published in Glasgow ‘*The Works of the Reverend Mr Henry Scougal*. Containing I. The Life of God in the Soul of Man. II. Sermons on important Subjects. III. Reflections and Meditations. IV. Essays, Moral and Divine. In 1770 R. A. Foulis issued an edition from their famous press in Glasgow. For information regarding Scougal and his writings, in addition to Professor Cooper’s Account, *ut sup.*, see an interesting book, *Henry Scougal and the Oxford Methodists; or, the Influence of a Religious Teacher of the Scottish Church*. By the Rev. D. Butler, M.A. 1899.

Christ formed within us. It is a divine life, a divine principle, 'a resemblance of the divine perfections, the image of the Almighty shining in the soul of men : nay, it is a real participation of His nature, it is a beam of the eternal light, a drop of that infinite ocean of goodness ; and they who are endued with it, may be said to have *God dwelling in their souls*, and *Christ formed within them.*' This divine life, having faith for its root, love to God, charity to man, purity and humility for its chief branches is perfectly exemplified in the holy life of our blessed Saviour, that model life which manifested itself in His diligence in doing God's will, patience in bearing it, in His constant devotion, His charity to men, His purity, His humility.

From Religion or the Divine Life exemplified in the 'sinless years that breathed beneath the Syrian blue,' the writer of *The Life of God in the Soul of Man* proceeds, in the second part, to deal with it as manifested in His followers. Taking up the branches in the order already given, the author starts with that of love and affection wherewith holy souls are united to God, and expatiates in glowing language upon the excellency of it, the advantage which flows from it, the worthiness of the object, the certainty of its being reciprocated, the perpetual presence of the beloved person, the participation it ensures in an infinite happiness, the sweetness it imparts to every dispensation and the delight with which it invests the duties and exercises of the reli-

gious life. As with love to God, so also with the other branches of the divine life—universal charity and love, purity, or contempt of sensual pleasures, and humility—all of which are ‘accompanied with the greatest satisfaction and sweetness.’ The third part of the treatise is occupied with general and special directions that may prove helpful in the development of ‘The Life of God in the Soul of Man.’ It does not call for detailed treatment. We may close this brief analysis of a remarkable book with a quotation from it which will serve to place it alongside of such writings of subjectivism as the *Imitation of Thomas à Kempis* and the *Exercises of Robert Leighton*. ‘It is impossible,’ writes the Aberdeen professor of divinity, ‘to express the great pleasure and delight which religious persons feel in the lowest prostration of their souls before God, when having a deep sense of the divine majesty and glory, they sink, if I may so speak, to the bottom of their beings, and vanish and disappear in the presence of God, by a serious and affectionate acknowledgment of their own nothingness, and the shortness and imperfections of their attainments.’

Scottish Subjectivism, such as we have found in the writings of Leighton and Scougal, is distinct from the mysticism which prevailed in Germany and the Netherlands in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the mysticism of the Brothers and Sisters of the Free Spirit, with whom it passed into pantheism and in whose conduct Christian liberty degenerated into

licentiousness. But Scottish mysticism is also far removed from Scottish Federalism as it was developed by such divines as Dickson and Durham in their *Sum and Practical Use of Saving Knowledge*. In the case of the Westminster Confession the most that can be said is that there is nothing in it which is explicitly opposed to the school of religious thought and experience founded by the Edinburgh Principal and the Aberdeen Professor. Mr Butler, in his admirable biography of the Restoration Bishop of Dunblane and Archbishop of Glasgow, claims the right to name Leighton's doctrine as 'a moderate Calvinism,'¹ which is the very description of Westminster Calvinism given by recent competent expounders. Certainly there is not in all the seven volumes of his works an expression of dissent from the Westminster symbolic book, which the Church of Scotland declared to be 'agreeable to the word of God, and in nothing contrary to the received doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of this Kirk.' That declaration was made in 1647, when Robert Leighton was parish minister of Newbattle. In one of his lectures when Primar of the University of Edinburgh (1653-1662) he also treats 'of the Decrees of God.' At the outset he makes an interesting reference to

¹ 'His sermons exhibit a moderate Calvinism. Although emphasis has been laid upon the Catholic element in Leighton, it is not to be inferred that this was inconsistent with the Calvinism which he inherited from his upbringing, his reading and his study. . . . It is to be recalled that this character of rare beauty and holiness grew up in Calvinistic soil, that Calvinism as a *living* system of thought and belief moulded him and shaped his religion.' *Life and Letters, ut sup.* pp. 152-53.

the catechetical documents of Westminster in these terms :—‘ in our Catechisms, especially the Shorter one, designed for the instruction of the ignorant, it might, perhaps, have been just as well to have passed over that more awful contemplation of the Divine decrees, and to have proceeded directly to the consideration of the works of God ; however, the thoughts you find in it, in this subject, are few, sober, clear, and certain. . . . Seeing, therefore, the decrees of GOD are mentioned in our Catechism, and it would not be proper to pass over in silence a matter of so great moment, I shall accordingly lay before you some few thoughts upon this difficult subject.’¹

III. UNIVERSALISM.

In last lecture it was pointed out that the basal truth or formative principle of Westminster theology is the Sovereignty of God. This Divine Sovereignty determines the whole government of the world, and so it includes, carries with it, and disposes of all the actions of God’s creatures, the eternal destinies of the human race and the ultimate fate of each intelligent creature. The Westminster divines were careful to observe this relation between Divine predestination or foreordination in general and election or the decrees of God with reference to men in particular and individually. They place in the forefront of the

¹ *Lectures and Addresses, ut sup.* Lecture xii. pp. 154-55.

chapter in the Confession which treats 'of God's Eternal Decree' the statement that 'God from all eternity did, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass; and from that they go on to affirm, 'By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death.'¹

In the earliest symbolic books of the Reformed Churches the doctrine of predestination as affecting human beings occupies a subordinate place. It is not disowned; but it is either omitted or only incidentally treated. There were other matters of primary and pressing importance—the doctrine of the Church, of Scripture, of Justification; that of election was not, what it afterwards became, a burning question.

But the state of matters was materially altered when Calvin's *Institutes* was published in 1536, and edition followed edition in quick succession.² In this work of a master mind the subject of Predestination occupies a prominent place. The Divine decree is stated in its bearing both upon the saved and upon the lost. In the case of some members of the human race the decree is one of election to eternal life; in the case of others it is a decree of reprobation to

¹ Chap. III. i., iii.

² The edition of Basle, in 1536, is the first. For the subsequent edition see *Introductory Notice* of Beveridge, *Calvin Translation Society, Institutes of the Christian Religion*, vol. i.

eternal death.¹ After Calvin's placing of it the doctrine obtained a position in Reformed symbols. It did so in the Confession of Faith which formed a part of *The Form of Prayers and Ministration of the Sacraments used in the English Congregation at Geneva*, drawn up in 1556, and in the preparation of which John Knox had a share. In that Anglo-Genevan document the customary order of statement is transposed. The Church, it is there said, 'is not seen to man's eye, but only known to God, who of the lost sons of Adam, hath ordained some, as vessels of wrath, to damnation, and hath chosen others, as vessels of His mercy to be saved.'²

In the earlier Anglican Articles Predestination is treated exclusively as predestination to life, or election to be saved ; it is the deliverance from curse and damnation of those who have been 'chosen in Christ out of mankind.'³ But the Lambeth Articles of 1595, which in Presbyterian circles would be called a Declaratory

¹ Book III. chap. xxi. Of the Eternal Election, by which God has predestinated some to salvation, and others to destruction. 'By predestination we mean the eternal decree of God, by which He determined with Himself whatever He wished to happen with regard to every man. All are not created on equal terms, but some are preordained to eternal life, others to eternal damnation ; and, accordingly, as each has been created for one or other of these ends, we say that he has been predestinated to life or to death.' Vol. ii. *ut sup.* p. 534.

² Laing's *Knox*, vol. iv. p. 171. Dunlop's *Collection*, vol. ii. p. 8.

³ 'Predestination to life is the everlasting purpose of God, whereby (before the foundations of the world were laid) He hath constantly decreed by His Counsel, secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation those whom He hath chosen in Christ out of mankind, and to bring them by Christ to everlasting salvation, as vessels made to honour.' xvii. 'Of Predestination and Election.'

Act or Statement, have special reference to the doctrine inadequately treated in previous symbols. The series of nine propositions opens with the statement, 'God from eternity hath predestinated some unto life and reprobated some unto death'; the fourth proposition is to the effect that 'Those who are not predestinated to salvation shall be necessarily condemned for their sins'; and the closing affirmation is 'It is not placed within the will or power of every man to be saved.'¹ It is unnecessary to make a detailed statement regarding the treatment of God's predestinating and foreordaining decree in the Irish Articles of 1516 and in the Canons of Dort in 1619, seeing it is substantially the same as that of the Anglo-Genevan symbol and the Anglican articles. We pass at once to the presentation of the doctrine made in the Westminster Confession.

In this symbolic book the following positions are laid down.

I. There is a decree of God whereby, 'for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are

¹ 1. Deus ab æterno prædestinavit quosdam ad vitam, et quosdam ad mortem reprobavit.

4. Qui non sunt prædestinati ad salutem necessario propter peccata sua damnabuntur.

9. Non est positum in arbitrio aut potestate uniuscuiusque hominis servari. Schaff's *Creeds*, vol. iii. pp. 523-24. Dr Schaff's English text is that of Fuller in his *Church History of Britain*, vol. iii. p. 147 of London Ed. of 1837, vol. v. p. 220 of Oxford University Press Ed. of 1845. A more modern and accurate translation is given by Prof. Warfield of Princeton in his Article, *Predestination in the Reformed Confessions*. *The Presbyterian and Reformed Review*, January 1901, pp. 108-09.

predestinated unto everlasting life, and others fore-ordained to everlasting death.'

II. In the case both of the 'some' predestinated and the 'others' foreordained there is a particular and unchangeable designation. In both cases the number 'is so certain and definite, that it cannot be either increased or diminished.'

III. Concerning the predestinated unto life it is affirmed :—

1. God hath chosen them in Christ 'before the foundation of the world was laid, according to His eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of His will.'

2. They are thus chosen 'unto everlasting glory,' out of God's 'mere free grace and love, without any foresight of faith or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions, or causes moving Him thereunto; and all to the praise of His glorious grace.'

3. In the case of the elect appointed unto glory there is a foreordination of all the means thereunto. And so 'they who are elected being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ; are effectually called unto faith in Christ by His Spirit working in due season; are justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by His power through faith unto salvation.' All this holds good of 'the elect only.'

IV. Concerning the foreordained unto everlasting death these things are affirmed :

1. 'According to the unsearchable counsel of His

own will, whereby He extendeth or withholdeth mercy as He pleaseth, for the glory of His sovereign power over His creatures' God was pleased to pass them by.

2. Those thus passed by, God was pleased to ordain 'to dishonour and wrath for their sin, to the praise of His glorious justice.'

V. 'Elect infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit, who worketh when, and where, and how He pleaseth. So also are all other elect persons who are incapable of being outwardly called by the minister of the word.'¹

On this Westminster presentation of the Scripture doctrine of Predestination some remarks, historical and explanatory, seem called for.

First. In their statement of God's government of the world the Westminster divines were careful to guard themselves against attributing to the Divine Being in His purposes or in His actions anything purely arbitrary or without reason, anything that would make Him the author of sin in His creatures, anything that would do violence to the will of rational beings, anything that would interfere with the orderly working of second causes as these operate necessarily in the physical creation, freely in human nature, and contingently in history.² All that, of course, applies

¹ Chap. III. iii.-vii., chap. X. iii.

² 'Although God knows whatsoever may or can come to pass upon all supposed conditions ; yet hath He not decreed anything because He foresaw it as future, or as that which would come to pass upon such conditions.' Chap. III. ii. 'Although, in relation to the foreknowledge and decree of God, the first cause, all things come to pass immutably and infallibly ; yet, by the same providence, He ordereth them to fall

to the Westminster view of the particular decree of God which takes to do with everlasting life and everlasting death in the case of human beings.

Second. There are peculiarities of phraseology deserving of being noted. Thus while of some men and angels it is stated that they are 'predestinated' unto life, of others it is affirmed that they are *foreordained* to death, and then when a point common to both is stated, both words are reproduced—'these, thus predestinated and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed.' It may be that, neither etymologically nor as a matter of general usage, is there much difference of meaning between the terms, but this remains that certain Calvinists have held that there is a difference between the way and manner in which the decree of election bears or operates upon the condition and fate of those who are saved and that in which it does so in the case of those who perish. By the employment of the two terms the compilers of the Confession may surely be held to indicate their belief in the existence of this difference, although they have not given any exact specification of its nature.¹

out according to the nature of second causes, either necessarily, freely, or contingently.' Chap. V. ii.

¹ Principal William Cunningham, while admitting 'it can scarcely be said that, either etymologically or according to the general usage of theologians, there is any difference of meaning between the words,' goes on to say that 'Calvinists, in general, have held that there is an important difference between the way and manner in which the decree of election bears or operates upon the condition and fate of those who are saved, and that in which the decree of reprobation, as it is often called, bears or operates upon the condition of those who perish ; and

Another distinction of expression is the avoidance of the word 'Reprobation.' That term has a place in the Lambeth Articles and in those of the Irish Episcopalian Church. 'Certain men God hath reprobated unto death,' declares the former series; 'God hath reprobated some unto death,' affirms the latter. The explanation of the non-employment of the theological and confessional term Reprobation in the Westminster Confession is, no doubt, to be found in the fact that it is open to misunderstanding and perversion, and so fitted to create a prejudice against the moderate Calvinism which the authors of the symbol wished to present.

Third. The occurrence of the three words 'for their sin' in the description of the divine ordaining to dishonour and wrath ought not to pass unnoticed. The explanation why God has passed by the non-elect is to be found in the Divine Sovereignty, in the exercise of which, according to the unsearchable counsel of His own will, God extendeth or withholdeth mercy as He pleaseth, for the glory of His sovereign power over His creatures. But the reason why God ordains those who are passed by to dishonour and wrath is to be found in their own guilt and wrong-doing, it is 'for their sin.'

In thus connecting the Divine ordaining with

the *existence* of this difference though without any exact specification of its nature the compilers of our Confession seem to have intended to indicate by restricting the word 'predestinate' to the elect, the saved; and using the word 'fore-ordained' in regard to the rest. *Historical Theology*, vol. ii. chap. xxv. § vii. p. 422.

human sinfulness the divines at Westminster were keeping their symbol in harmony with those of England and of Ireland. For in both the Lambeth and the Dublin Articles it is affirmed that those who are not predestinated to salvation shall be condemned 'for their sins.'¹

Fourth. The only other matter calling for remark is the position laid down in the Confession regarding members of the human race dying in infancy or who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the word.

The definite statement on this difficult and obscure subject which the Westminster creed-makers commit themselves to is that 'elect infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit, who worketh when, and where, and how He pleaseth. So also are all other elect persons, who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the word.'² A good deal of acrimonious controversy and special pleading, if not of verbal quibbling, has gathered round that expression 'elect infants.' Some contend that the adjective 'elect' is intended to limit 'infants' and 'all other persons' in such a way

¹ In the Edition of the *Confession* printed at London and re-printed at Edinburgh in 1647 the words are 'for their sin.' But in the Latin translation which was issued at Cambridge in 1656, at Glasgow in 1660, and at Edinburgh in 1694, the rendering is *pro peccatis suis*. Schaff's *Creeeds*, vol. iii. p. 610.

In the Westminster *Larger Catechism* the statement of the matter is :—God . . . hath passed by and preordained the rest to dishonour and wrath, to be *for their sin* inflicted, to the praise of the glory of His justice, Q. 13.

² Chap. x.—Of Effectual Calling, iii.

as to intimate that there are some elect persons among infants dying in infancy and among incapables, while there are others in these two classes of human beings who are non-elect and therefore lost; and so they charge the Westminster Confession with teaching 'the damnation of infants.'¹ Others again maintain that the proper contrast is not between elect infants dying in infancy and non-elect infants so dying, but between elect infants cut off in childhood and elect infants living to grow up and to be outwardly called in the ordinary way. Their contention is that there is nothing in the Confession that binds the writers of and subscribers to it to the belief that there is such a class as non-elect infants dying in infancy, nothing which asserts, suggests, or implies either that some infants are passed by, or that all are saved.² If it be kept in

¹ Prof. C. A. Briggs, D.D. 'These persons saved without baptism and the outward ministry of the Word are not 'infants' and 'other persons,' or 'all infants' and 'all other persons,' but 'elect infants' and 'all other elect persons.' . . . It seems plain that the adjective 'elect' limits 'infants' as it does 'all other persons'; and that the Westminster Confession teaches that 'there are some elect persons among infants and incapables who cannot hear the Gospel, as well as among those who hear the Gospel and enjoy the sacraments.' The Westminster Confession classes incapables and infants together, and teaches that there are elect ones among them as well as among others. In recent times the Church has stumbled over the doctrine of the damnation of infants, and the phrase 'elect infants' which seems to imply that doctrine. . . . We do not hesitate to express our dissent from the Westminster Confession in this limitation of the divine electing grace. We are of opinion that God's electing grace saves all infants, and not a few of the heathen.' *Damnation of Infants*, chap. v. Excesses. *Whither? A Theological Question for the Times*, 1889.

² Prof. B. B. Warfield, D.D. 'The opinion that a body of non-elect infants dying in infancy and not saved is implied in this passage, although often controversially asserted, is not only a wholly unreason-

view that the controverted statement does not occur in that chapter of the symbol which deals with God's electing decree, but in that which treats of Effectual Calling to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ, and that it applies equally to persons incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the word, it will be seen that the confessional position is neither more nor less than this that all God's elect, dying in infancy, are regenerated and saved, although they are not capable of being effectually called, regeneration and salvation in their case, as in that of all elected incapables, being the work of the Spirit who works when, and where, and how He pleaseth. Further: that, whatever may have been the private opinion of individual members of Assembly the compilers of the Confession thought it not wise to go further in their symbolic book. 'Their silence,' as has been said, 'is as favourable to one type of belief as to another.'¹ In consequence of this wise reticence, this cautious abstinence from dogmatising where Scripture is silent,

able opinion exegetically, but is absolutely negatived by the history of the formation of this clause in the Assembly as recorded in the *Minutes* and has never found favour among the expositors of the Confession.' *The Development of the Doctrine of Infant Salvation*. Second Paper in *Two Studies in the History of Doctrine*, 1897, p. 215 and n.

¹ 'Whether these elect comprehend all infants dying such, or some only—whether there is such a class as non-elect infants dying in infancy, their words neither say nor suggest. No Reformed confession enters into this question; no word is said by any one of them which either asserts or implies either that some infants are reprobated or that all are saved. What has been held in common by the whole body of Reformed theologians on this subject is asserted in these confessions; of what has been disputed among them the confessions are silent.' Prof. B. B. Warfield, *ut sup.* p. 216.

it is open to subscribers to the Westminster Standards to cherish the wider faith and the larger hope that all dying in infancy, all imbecile and insane persons will be saved through the supernatural operations of the Holy Spirit, saved by Christ who gathers the little ones and the feeble folk into the roomy, abiding places of His Father's house.

The first movement of departure from the Confessional faith of the Church of Scotland concerning the doctrine of Election originated with a woman, who was a foreigner. Antoinette Bourignon, a Flemish Roman Catholic of the seventeenth century (1619-1680) advanced in aberration as she advanced in years until, when she had reached middle life, she claimed Divine inspiration, and left Quietists and Quakers far behind in the extravagance of her notions. Not content with giving publicity to her views through the press¹ the Flemish mystic travelled through France, Holland, England, and Scotland, and in all these countries she gathered round her some who believed in her mission and adopted her creed. Among her converts in this country was Dr George Garden of Aberdeen, who was of some repute as a naturalist, and who preached the funeral sermon of Henry Scougal. Captured by the spiritual tone that pervaded it, the northern divine published a defence of the teaching of Bourignon.² The matter came

¹ One of her works—*The Light of the World*—was translated into English and published in 1696.

² Garden's *Apology for M. Antonia Bourignon* was published anonymously in 1699.

before the General Assembly of 1701 on a reference from a Commission of Visitation within the bounds of Aberdeen and other northern counties. By that court the writings of the Continental fanatic were pronounced to be 'fraught with impious, pernicious, and damnable doctrines.' Among other errors of 'the said M. Antonia Bourignon' there is specified 'the denying of the decrees of election and reprobation, and the loading of those acts of grace and sovereignty with a multitude of odious and blasphemous aspersions, particularly wickedness, cruelty, and respect of persons. For his share in spreading the obnoxious tenets and for contumacy in not compearing when cited to appear before them the same Assembly deposed Dr George Garden from the office of the ministry.¹ Alarmed at the prospect of the multiplying of Bourignonists within her borders the Church of Scotland in 1711 required ministers at their ordination to disown 'all Popish, Arian, Socinian, Arminian, *Bourignon*, and other doctrines, tenets, and opinions whatsoever, contrary to and inconsistent with the Confession of Faith.'² Repudiation of the heresy was exacted long after it had ceased to be a factor in Scottish theological speculation; but happily for all concerned no candidate for presbyterian ordination is

¹ Sess. 15, March 5, 1701, post meridian.—Act Condemning the Book entitled, *An Apology for M. Antonia Bourignon*.

Sess. 15, March 5, 1701, post meridian.—Sentence of Deposition against Dr George Garden in Aberdeen.

Acts of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, pp. 306-08.

² *Ibid.* p. 455.

now required to disown what he probably knows little or nothing about, and no congregation in town or country hears a term, correctly or incorrectly pronounced, of the meaning of which they have not the faintest conception.¹

The next troubling of the waters in Scotland over the doctrine of Election was the doing of Thomas Erskine, a layman, who, although he habitually worshipped in her churches, preached occasionally to her people, and took an heritor's part in the settlement of her ministers, never signed the Confession and was not amenable to the discipline of the Church of Scotland.² The Laird of Linlathen was what the Germans call a *schöne Seele*, and rarely has it fallen to the lot of such a soul to be so happily situated and surrounded for the exercise of its beautiful shining qualities as was this Scot. For the greater part of his life he was a country gentleman, free from all domestic or professional inroads upon his time, and detached from political and ecclesiastical strife of parties. From the day he entered upon the leisure and amenities of his country seat, Erskine gave much

¹ In 1846 the Free Church of Scotland substituted 'Erastian' for 'Bourignon.' In 1889 the Established Church of Scotland followed the good example so far as to drop all mention of the extinct heresy.

² 'Presbyterian by his paternal connection with the author of the *Institutes* and the minister of Greyfriars, Episcopalian by his maternal descent and by his early education, it came to pass that in later life whilst still delighting in the occasional services and ministrations of the Episcopal Church, and enjoying to the last the tender care of an Episcopalian curate, he yet habitually frequented the worship and teaching of the National Church, both in country and in town.' Dean Stanley, *Reminiscences of Thomas Erskine. Letters. 1840-1870*, p. 293.

of his time and thought to meditation and speculation upon religious subjects and theological problems. In order to ascertain Erskine's view of the doctrine of Election one naturally turns to his work which bears that title and which was published in 1837.¹ But earlier than that date the mind and imagination of the man had come under the spell of Universalism and gradually every part of his creed became stamped with this hall-mark of Linlathen. There has been, so thought Erskine, a universal election in the Son of God, who is the original foundation and ground of man's being, and is actually in every man, the Head and Root of the whole race. There is a universal purpose of God regarding the human race, and that purpose is to make every human being partaker of His own blessedness by making all partakers in His own holiness. In the carrying out of this intention God educates every human being. For Erskine the thought of life and all its experience, society and all its combinations, being formed by God to be a school for the discipline and education of the individual had a strong and growing fascination. At one time he viewed the human race as on probation, but latterly he abandoned the idea of probation and adopted that of education. 'We are not in a state of trial, we are in a process of education, directed by that eternal purpose of love which brought us into

¹ *The Doctrine of Election*, and its connection with the general tenor of Christianity, illustrated from many parts of Scripture, and especially from the Epistle to the Romans. By Thomas Erskine, Esq., Advocate, 1837.

being.' The patience and persistence of the Divine Teacher were ever present to the devout spirit of Thomas Erskine. The longer he brooded over the matter the more it was borne in upon him that in the case of some the Divine education is continued beyond this life. Seeing a large proportion of the human race die in infancy, that of those who reach manhood and womanhood there are many who cannot be said to have received any education, and that of those who fare better not one in a million appears to benefit by what is received, he was convinced that the divine education does not terminate on this side the grave. It was natural and inevitable that the man who believed there has been a universal election of the human race in Christ and that there is a divine education of every individual member composing it should complete his creed with a belief in universal restoration. Erskine certainly did so. Starting in early life with a *hope* of the ultimate salvation of all, by the time he was fifty years of age he had reached the conviction that the process of spiritual culture, continued beyond this life, will go on until every human soul is brought back to God. It seemed to him almost blasphemous to suppose that the Creator will throw from Him into everlasting darkness a creature capable of His own blessedness because it has resisted His gracious purposes during the natural period of life on earth. 'No;' he was in the habit of saying, 'He who waited so long for the formation of a piece of old red sandstone will surely wait with

much long-suffering for the perfecting of a human spirit.¹

To criticise the Universalism of Erskine as that of a systematic theologian would be ungracious and unfair. The life-service of the man is not to be found in his system, if indeed he ever possessed, or cared to possess such an article. Nothing was at any time further from his thoughts than the purpose to found a school of theology or to form a party in the Church. There was too much inwardness in his thinking, too little of sequence and cohesion in his opinions to render it possible for him to do either the one thing or the other. But while he had few followers and no successors Erskine had many friends and a wide circle of sympathisers. The winsome personality and the many-sidedness of the man drew to him a number of his countrymen of widely differing character and from far apart walks of life. Such large-hearted men as Thomas Chalmers and Norman Macleod, the big-brained Thomas Carlyle, Edward Irving the Hebrew prophet of the age, and the sweet-natured writer of *Rab and his Friends*; professional men like Principal Shairp, Lord Rutherford, and Bishop Ewing—these, had they been brought together at one time under his roof might not have constituted a perfectly

¹ *Letters*, ut sup. p. 242. 'We are evidently in the midst of a process, and the slowness of God's processes in the material world prepares us, or ought to prepare us, for something analogous in the moral world; so that at least we may be allowed to trust that He who has taken untold ages for the formation of a bit of old red sandstone may not be limited to threescore years and ten for the perfecting of a human spirit.' *The Spiritual Order and other Papers*, 1871, p. 53.

harmonious brotherhood, and yet each of them had a share in the friendship and hospitality of the catholic-minded laird of Linlathen.

In the inner circle of Erskine's wide friendship there were two men, each of whom, while pursuing his own path with absolute independence, moved in an orbit of ever-increasing divergence from the confessional teaching of his mother church, and with each of whom that church was ultimately constrained to part. The two were John M'Leod Campbell and Alexander J. Scott.

When in 1825 M'Leod Campbell was placed in the parish of Row he entered upon his ministry on strictly orthodox lines. He set out with a deep conviction regarding the will and purpose of God concerning man, and concerning the Divine gift of Revelation. In other words, he started with the truths contained in the answers to the two opening questions in the Shorter Catechism. But in the course of personal dealing with his parishioners the diligent student and devoted pastor perceived that something personal was standing in the way of their accepting and possessing Christ as their Saviour. In the case of one person this something might be lack of repentance, in that of another want of faith, in that of a third it might be a sense of not being good enough. No one questioned Christ's power and willingness to save; all their doubts were as to themselves. And so the concerned parish minister set himself to discover such a view of saving faith as would bring them into the

mental attitude of looking at God revealed in Christ and of learning His feelings towards them instead of looking at themselves and considering their feelings towards Him. This he found in what, with unfortunate ambiguity in the use of terms, he styled the Assurance of Faith. With Campbell assurance was the synonym of certitude, and in that sense of the term he taught his people that it is of the essence of faith. He used to say to them, If you knew the mind of God towards you as the gospel reveals it, if you only knew about yourselves what in the light of the gospel I know about you—knew as really your own the unsearchable riches which you have in Christ—you must needs rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ. I only ask you to know what now is.¹ Another revealed truth upon which M'Leod Campbell considered he obtained new light in the course of his six years' ministry at Row was that of the Atonement. The more earnestly he sought for a Scripture foundation for the assurance which he held to be of the essence of faith the more was it borne in upon him that such was only to be found in proclaiming that Christ had died for all men and had become God's gift to every human being. And so the next step in the new preaching at Row was to announce

¹ 'I only labour to undeceive you in thinking that though it does not give you peace you know it already. If your words could be true, then indeed your case would be hopeless. If you knew all that is to be known, and yet knew not enough for your peace, then whence could peace ever come to you?' *Reminiscences and Reflections*, referring to his early ministry in the parish of Row, 1825,-31, vii. p. 176.

Universal Atonement and Pardon through the blood of Christ. When it became matter of rumour and then of notoriety in the Presbytery of Dumbarton that M'Leod Campbell was proclaiming Christ's death for all men, and forgiveness in Christ for all men, that, while his brethren preached, Believe in the forgiveness of your sins, and they will be forgiven, he said, Believe in the forgiveness of your sins because they are forgiven; believe that Christ died for you because He died for all mankind, then the expected took place. He was called upon to defend his preaching at the bar of his presbytery. In the libel which impeached his orthodoxy he was accused of holding and promulgating that assurance is of the essence of faith, and also the tenet of universal atonement and pardon, both of which opinions were declared to be contrary to the Holy Scriptures and to the Confession of Faith.

In his answer to the charge of teaching Universalism the accused admitted that 'the present Confession is silent on the subject,' but argued (1) that in previous symbols, such as the Thirty-nine Articles and the old Scottish Confession of 1560, there was no limitation of the extent of the Atonement, and (2) that the Westminster Confession, as it came from England was accepted in Scotland, as in nothing contrary to the received doctrine of this Kirk.' The final stage in Mr Campbell's trial upon the charge of departure from the faith he had subscribed when he became a minister of the Church of Scotland was reached in

May 1831. He then appeared at the bar of the General Assembly as an appellant against an adverse decision of the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr. On this occasion he reiterated the statements made in the two inferior courts as to the relation between his teaching and that of the Westminster Confession. While he affirmed that the tenets he was charged with were not contradicted by anything to be found in that symbol, he freely admitted that the latter does not state that Christ died for all, and that it contains no statement of the benefits enjoyed by all through His death. He frankly avowed, 'I do teach that the Atonement was for the whole human race without exception and without distinction.' In closing his defence Mr Campbell alluded to what had been said in the course of the pleadings from the bar to the effect that his teaching implied or inferred Universal Salvation. This he emphatically denied. He did not hold the theory of universal restitution. He believed in a Universal Atonement, but he also believed that in and of itself that does not imply the exemption of a single soul from future misery.¹

¹ In justice to M'Leod Campbell it ought to be noted that in no subsequent development of his creed did he commit himself to the theory of final restitution or universal salvation as held by Erskine. A few months before his death, writing about the intended publication of his friend's posthumous work *The Spiritual Order*, and referring to what he called 'the great essence of his book'—the conclusion as to the future of man at which he arrives, Dr Campbell stated he would regret were it concluded that he *rejected* it. 'I am,' he went on, to say, 'very far from this. I still feel difficulties which did not weigh with him. I have never felt yet in a fulness of light which would enable me to teach on the subject; as I have felt on the Atonement—its extent—its nature

As in the subordinate courts so in that of last resort the libelled minister of Row failed to convince his judges that his teaching was in harmony with that of Scripture and the Confession; and so John M'Leod Campbell was deposed from the office of the holy ministry.¹

Among those who witnessed the deposition was the other member of Erskine's inner circle of friends. Alexander J. Scott received license from the Presbytery of Paisley in 1827, and in the following year he formed an intimate and loving acquaintance with Thomas Erskine, John M'Leod Campbell, and Edward Irving. By the last named he was invited to become assistant-missionary when the congregation of Regent Square, London, began a mission to deal with the needs of the neighbourhood and the spiritual condition of Scotsmen in the metropolis generally.² While labouring in London Mr Scott received an invitation to the vacant pastorate of the presbyterian church at

—Revelation—The Lord's Supper.' It is a question, he is glad to find, so many good men feel to be an open one. If required to choose between *final restitution* and *annihilation* he would prefer the former 'both as a Scriptural question, and as one of Christian philosophy.' *Memorials*, vol. ii. chap. xiv. pp. 294-95.

¹ . . . 'he was deposed by an almost unanimous vote of the House—both parties, the Moderates and the Evangelicals, agreeing in execrating his heresy, and congratulating one another that though they might differ in points of polity they could combine to cast out a man who believed that the Creator loved all His creatures.' Dr John Cunningham's *Church History of Scotland*, vol. ii. chap. xxvii. p. 447.

² 'I was delighted with Sandy Scott, whom I have invited to come to London. I trust the Lord will deliver him out of his present deep waters.' Edward Irving to his wife. *Regent Square*. By John Hair, 1898, p. 86.

Woolwich. Before a settlement could take place it was necessary for him to renew his subscription to the Confession of Faith. In anticipation of this the elected probationer informed the Moderator of Presbytery that as he could not accept ordination on such a condition he felt bound to renounce any claim or right the Woolwich congregation might be supposed to have given him to become their minister. The question as to what after this avowal should be done was referred to the Presbytery in Scotland from whom he had received license. The Presbytery of Paisley took action in the matter and deprived Mr Scott of his license. The case came by appeal before the General Assembly of 1831—the same that had deposed John M'Leod Campbell. Not concealing the contrariety of his views to the teaching of the Confession, Mr Scott undertook to show that wherein he differed from the symbol it differed from Scripture. But the court declined to listen to such a defence, and, acting on the declaration that he did not believe the whole doctrine of the Westminster standard, withdrew from him his license to preach the gospel.

The action of the Church toward the deposed minister and the deprived licentiate has been severely criticised, and it has been confidently asserted that what was done then would not be done now in similar circumstances. In the case of Mr Campbell it is open to question if it was wise and necessary for the Assembly to inflict the severe and extreme sentence of deposition. The milder one of suspension would

certainly have met all the requirements of the case, and would probably have been inflicted had there not been something approaching a panic in the church at the time, created by the religious movement which began with the alleged restoration of primitive gifts, and which culminated in the formation of the Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. That faithfulness to her standards required the Church of Scotland to take some action in the case both of Campbell and Scott seems certain, and was recognised by all parties in the Church.

The teaching of both men on cardinal doctrines of the Faith was not simply extra-confessional, it was contra-confessional. The lucid intellect of the probationer saw that from the first. The less powerful, more sophistical mind of the Row minister thought otherwise in the earlier stages of his speculations. Ultimately, however, he abandoned the contention that, although his teaching might not be in verbal harmony with the propositions of the Westminster document, it did not run counter to the spirit and historical setting thereof. 'The two friends,' writes the editor of Erskine's *Letters*, 'were present each at the other's trial before the Assembly. When Scott's case closed, they walked home together. 'After that dreary night in the Assembly,' Scott tells us, 'the dawn breaking upon us as we returned at length, alike condemned, to our lodging in the New Town of Edinburgh, I turned round and looked upon my companion's face under the pale light, and asked him,

Could you sign the Confession now? His answer was, No. The Assembly was right: our doctrine and the Confession are incompatible.’¹

The subsequent career of the gifted Alexander Scott does not concern us as he ultimately abandoned theology and betook himself to philosophy and literature.² Dr Campbell, when set free from ministerial work, gave himself to the deepening of his knowledge of God’s Word and to the widening of his acquaintance with theological literature. At intervals there came from his pen works of minor importance, dealing with what were present-day religious questions or furnishing interesting *Reminiscences and Reflections* referring to his early and brief ministry in the parish of Row. But the larger portion of his enforced leisure was devoted to a fresh and profound study of what, he rightly judged, occupies a fundamental place in Christianity—the doctrine of the Atonement. The fruit of that study was given to the world in 1856, when there appeared the book with which his name will always be associated, and which will perpetuate the memory of its author.³ Dr M’Leod Campbell’s

¹ *Letters of Thomas Erskine*, vol. i. p. 140.

² After ministering to his sympathisers at Woolwich for some years Scott obtained the chair of English Language and Literature in University College in 1848, and in 1851 he was appointed Principal and also one of the Professors of Owen’s College, Manchester. He died in 1866. George MacDonald’s *Robert Falconer* is dedicated ‘To the memory of the man who stands highest in the oratory of my memory, Alexander John Scott, I, daring, presume to dedicate this book.’

³ *The Nature of the Atonement and its relation to remission of Sins and eternal Life*, 1856. Second edition, with an Introduction and Notes, 1867. Fourth and cheaper edition, 1874.

theory of the Atonement has failed to commend itself to either Calvinistic or Arminian divines in Britain, on the Continent, and in America. It is regarded as open to objection because of the answers which it returns to the questions, For whom was the Atonement made? What is the Atonement? In other words it is defective in its treatment of the reference and the nature of Christ's atoning work.

As regards the reference or the extent of the Atonement it will be remembered that when minister at Row Dr Campbell claimed to have got new light upon this subject. He began to preach that Christ died for all men. He gloried in proclaiming a universal atonement, while he disclaimed the doctrine of universal salvation. At no subsequent stage of his career did he either recede from or advance beyond that ambiguous, equivocal position. He reiterated in his publication of 1856 what he uttered at the bar of the Assembly in 1831. 'I believe,' he wrote, 'that the atonement has been an atonement for sin, having reference to all mankind.'¹ There was really nothing new in this statement, and there was nothing in it openly anti-Calvinistic or contra-confessional.

Long before Dr Campbell's day there were Calvinists who were also Universalists. Most, if not all, advocates of a limited Atonement have held the infinite value and race-wide reference of Christ's sacrifice for sin. Some have availed themselves of a scholastic formula and have asserted that Christ died *sufficiens pro*

¹ *Ut sup.* chap. i. p. 2 of second edition.

omnibus, efficaciter pro electis. And all Calvinists have recognised certain advantages or benefits conferred upon the human race by the atoning death of the Lamb of God. This recognition supplies a warrant for saying that, in a general way, Christ died for all men, that, as the Marrow men of the eighteenth century loved to put it, He is God's deed of gift to mankind sinners. And so from the time of Cameron in France, of Amyraldus in Holland, and of Baxter in England there have been Calvinists who have also been Universalists, in that sense, to that extent. The framers of the Westminster Confession were thoroughly at home in all the discussions in which the divines just named took part, much more so than Dr Cameron ever became. They did not concern themselves to affirm a limited Atonement by denying that Christ died for all men. They took a more effectual and a more accurate way of stating the Calvinistic position. They separated the impetration or purchase from the application of Redemption. Their position was that, whatever may hold good regarding the impetration, only those elected have the Redemption applied to them, are effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and finally glorified.¹ Dr Campbell saw that when the extent or reference of the Atonement is thus stated, when it is affirmed that Redemption is applied to all for whom it was purchased, and that it is not purchased for any except those to whom it is savingly applied, there is asserted

¹ Compare *Confession of Faith*, Chap. III. v., VIII. v. viii.

a particular as opposed to a general, a limited as opposed to a universal atonement. He admitted that if Redemption, as defined in the Confession, stands for the work of atonement done in the person of Christ, the shedding of His blood for the remission of sins, that is to say, for the impetration alone, then is there an explicit limitation of the atonement. But at first he tried to assure himself and to persuade others that under the term Redemption the Confession includes the actual deliverance of the redeemed, in other words the application as well as the purchase. In later years, however, Dr Campbell abandoned the effort to make the Westminster standard teach universal atonement in his sense of that expression, and acknowledged, as he did to his friend Scott, that his view and that of the document he subscribed at licence and ordination did not harmonise.

And this holds good, possibly to a still greater extent, of Campbell's theory regarding the nature of the Atonement. In the work specially devoted to the treatment of this topic certain doctrines which have a place of prominence in the Westminster theology drop out. The penal character of our Lord's sufferings, the imputation of His obedience and satisfaction to those who are the objects of His mediatorial work—these are put out of court as the errors of earlier or more recent and modified Calvinism. According to Campbell it is neither Scriptural nor rational to say as the Westminster divines so grandly said: 'The Lord Jesus, by His perfect obedience and

sacrifice of Himself, which He through the eternal Spirit once offered up unto God, hath fully satisfied the justice of His Father; and purchased not only reconciliation, but an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven for all those whom the Father hath given unto Him.”¹

The particular theory of which M'Leod Campbell is the leading, if not the sole advocate has been distinguished as that of redemption by Christ's self-imputation of sin, or by perfect confession of sin. Denying any *objective* imputation of sin to Christ by the First Cause and Last End of all, he affirmed that Christ imputed to Himself as a partaker of humanity, the world's sin, to the extent of making a sorrowful confession of it, which was accepted by God as a confession by humanity and, therefore, as a ground of forgiveness. 'This adequate sorrow for the sin of man, and adequate confession of its evil,' to quote his own words, 'implies no fiction—no imputation to the sufferer of the guilt of the sin for which He suffers; but only that He has taken the nature and become the brother of those whose sin He confesses before their Father, and that He feels concerning their sins what, as the holy one of God, and as perfectly loving God and man, He must feel.'²

A theory of the Atonement which thus places representation in the room of substitution, which

¹ Compare *Confession of Faith*, Chap. VIII. v.

² *The Nature of the Atonement*, chap. vi. Retrospective Aspect of the Atonement, p. 146. Second edition.

rejects the objective imputation of sin and righteousness, but asserts with emphasis a subjective self-imputation of sin by Christ to Himself has been treated, since it was propounded, as 'the eccentricity of a devout author, who, dissatisfied with the traditional theory, has substituted in its place another, involving not only greater difficulty, but even something very like absurdity.¹ With all its inadequacy and eccentricity, Dr Campbell's *Nature of the Atonement* is a great and fine work, obviously written, to use his own expression, 'under the awe of truth,' by one who thought freely, giving place to no biasing influence; free to hear all true voices, free to welcome all true light.

The influence of M'Leod Campbell's personality and writings has been considerable. To a marked degree it told upon his relative and life-long intimate—Dr Norman Macleod, a man of over-flowing humanity, of strenuous activity, and of wide catholicity. As early as 1840, during his ministry in his first charge, the future minister of Glasgow regarded it as clear as day that Christ died for all. 'The stripe for stripe theory'—so he termed substitution—must be given up, and the doctrine of a universal atonement must take its place. In the later years of his life, after the publication of his cousin's work, he adopted the theory of the Atonement therein propounded, because it seemed to furnish him with the philosophy of that

¹ *The Humiliation of Christ, in its Physical, Ethical, and Official Aspects* By Alex. B. Bruce, D.D. Lec. vi. p. 355.

doctrine ; and his brother, in his *Memoirs*, assures us that he certainly never recurred to the conception of the sufferings of our Lord as penal, or to those notions of the nature of salvation which it involves.¹ If it occurred to Dr Macleod that this involved divergence from the creed which he subscribed at ordination, that would not be to him a matter of great concern, if we may judge from his statements regarding creed subscription made in another connection. In 1865 the popular minister of the Barony became involved in a controversy regarding the Scripture ground for the observance of the New Testament Lord's Day as distinguished from the Sabbath of the old economy. As is often the case, the controversy widened out into a larger question, that namely of the relation of the Mosaic Law to Christian life. In the course of the discussion Dr Macleod frankly admitted that he had departed from the letter of the Confession. But in defence he asserted that others did so also, and that no one now believed every iota of the symbol. When the controversy closed without the Assembly taking any action in the matter he claimed to have established the principle so far as his own Church was concerned, that all divergences from the Confession, apart from the nature of the difference, did not involve deposition. He regarded the National Church as having virtually taken up this position : Henceforth we shall keep our Confession, with power

¹ *Memoir of Norman Macleod, D.D.* By his brother, Donald Macleod, D.D., chap. xvi. p. 307.

to depose on any point of difference, yet judicially determining what point or what degree of difference.¹

John Tulloch, although a younger man, was the contemporary of Norman Macleod,² but the latter would have been the first to confess that he was not the compeer of the former in respect of intellectual ability and scholarly acquirements. As Professor of Theology and Principal of St Mary's College, Saint Andrews, as a leader in the councils and conflicts of the State Church, and as a contributor to the philosophical and theological literature of the last century Dr Tulloch attained an honourable and influential place in the movements of his day. There may not be any explicit statement in his writings upon Universalism as held by Erskine or as taught by M'Leod Campbell, but it is doing him no injustice to suppose that he concurred in the views advocated by the latter in his work on the Atonement. It was matter of satisfaction to the author whose views on that doctrine the Church of Scotland had condemned when told that the Professor at Saint Andrews had directed the attention of his students to the book in terms of high commendation, a procedure which evoked the admiration of Norman Macleod because of the moral courage he considered it manifested. From an early stage of his professional career the broad churchman proclaimed himself out of sympathy with Calvinism. He admitted that viewed as an ex-

¹ *Ibid.* chap. xviii. pp. 372-73.

² Norman Macleod, 1812-1872. John Tulloch, 1823-1886,

haustive, logical generalisation of Christian truth the system was unassailable and 'the natural victor of Arminianism.'¹ But then a logical theological system had no charm for him. It might suit the tastes and satisfy the requirements of an age of creed formulating, an age in which the human intellect was the verifying faculty and logic was the only organ for verifying. But that state of matters, he considered, no longer exists. Logic has ceased to be in supremacy; a spirit of Scripture interpretation is abroad which would not have been palatable, if indeed intelligible to Calvin; the whole sphere of religious credence is differently apprehended, and the provinces of faith and of logical deduction are recognised as not merely incommensurate but as radically distinguished. The result is a revolt. Men are weary of heterodoxy and orthodoxy alike. A second Calvin in theology is impossible. Men thirst not less for spiritual truth, but they no longer believe in the ability of system to embrace and contain that truth, as in a reservoir, for successive generations.²

By the time he published his most elaborate and ablest work³ Dr Tulloch was convinced he had found a more excellent method than that of systematising, a better organ for discriminating between truth and

¹ *Leaders of the Reformation*. By John Tulloch, D.D., 1859, 'Calvin,' p. 165. See Article on this book by Principal William Cunningham in *British and Foreign Evangelical Review*, April 1860, reprinted in *The Reformers and the Theology of the Reformation*, 1866.

² *Ibid.* pp. 168, 169.

³ *Rational Theology and Christian Philosophy in England in the XVII. Century*, 2 vols., 1872. Second edition, 1874.

error then was supplied by the logic of dogmatism. The method and the organ are to be found in the Spirit of Rational Inquiry, that Spirit which animated the Cambridge Platonists, the liberal theologians of the seventeenth century, and which approved itself to the broad churchmen of the nineteenth. Now that Rationalism, broad, tolerant, liberal, has taken the place of dogmatism the days of Augustinian domination and of Calvinian intolerance are forever ended. The key-stone of absolute Predestination having been removed, the structure which it held together has broken down, and the way is open for Christian Science and Christian Reason, looking before and after, to gather into their 'ample thoughtfulness the experiences of the Past, as well as the eager aspirations of the Present.'¹

The teaching of Erskine, Scott and Campbell, of Macleod and Tulloch has influenced recent theological literature and pulpit ministrations, although it may be difficult to estimate with exactness the nature and amount of the influence. If we take such a volume as that which appeared, six years before the death of Principal Tulloch, under the title of *Scotch Sermons*,² it is obvious that there are some

¹ *Ibid.*, vol. I. xiii. p. 9.

² *Scotch Sermons*, 1880. 'This volume,' it is stated in the opening paragraph of the preface, 'has originated in the wish to gather together a few specimens of a style of teaching which increasingly prevails amongst the clergy of the Scottish Church.' While not claiming to represent the full extent of that teaching, the volume 'may serve to indicate a growing tendency, and to show the direction in which thought is moving.' The contributors, as enumerated and described

of the thirteen contributors to its contents who, if not disciples of the writers just named, are certainly followers at no great distance. In Patrick Hamilton's time when any student at Saint Andrews came under the influence of Gavin Logie of St Leonard's College and imbibed Reformation principles, his companions said of him, 'he has drunk of St Leonard's well.' One of the preachers of *Scotch Sermons* tells his hearers or readers that evil is not an actual entity, but a mere privation or undeveloped good, and that as such it will gradually be eliminated from the universe by the benignly transforming operation of Order, which is another name for God, that no objective Atonement is necessary, and that only in a figurative sense can Christ be said to have expiated sin or purchased its remission, for all that He did, in strict and literal sense, was to reveal to us the infinite placability of the Divine nature.¹ Another contributor to the contents of the volume assures us that in the fact that man is the subject of a Divine but

in the table of contents, were:—The Very Rev. John Caird, D.D., Principal of the University of Glasgow (Two Sermons). The Rev. John Cunningham, D.D., Crieff (Do.). The Rev. D. J. Ferguson, B.D., Strathblane (Do.). The Rev. William Knight, LL.D., Professor of Moral Philosophy in the University of St Andrews [and understood to be Editor of the vol.] (Do.). The Rev. William Mackintosh, D.D., Buchanan (Do.). The Rev. William Leckie McFarlan, Lenzie (Do.). The Rev. Allan Menzies, B.D., Abernyte (Do.). The Rev. James Nicoll, Murroes (One Sermon). The Rev. Thomas Rain, M.A., Hutton (Two Sermons). The Rev. Adam Semple, B.D., Huntly (One Sermon). The Rev. John Stevenson, Glamis (Do.). The Rev. Patrick Stevenson, Inverarity (Two Sermons). The Rev. Robert Herbert Story, D.D., Roseneath (Do.).

¹ Sermon x. 'The Renovating Power of Christianity.' Mackintosh.

unperfected Education in this life there is a strong argument for the continuance of his life hereafter, when, under more favourable conditions (including the sharp discipline of pain) the capabilities of moral and spiritual excellence, which remain almost wholly undeveloped in the present life of some human beings, will be developed in the life that is to come.¹ And the writer of the sermon which is the last of the series informs us that he is unable to find satisfaction in any doctrine of imputation, or in any talk about being clothed with Christ's righteousness, that he prefers knowing nothing of that righteousness except as he sees it in Christ, and as he tries day by day to work it out in his own life.² Surely we do the authors of such statements as these no wrong when we hazard the conjecture that they have drunk of the well of Linlathen, of Saint Mungo, or of Saint Andrews.

¹ Sermon xii. 'The Things which cannot be shaken.' McFarlan.

² Sermon xxiii. 'Christian Righteousness.' Story.

LECTURE IV.

WESTMINSTER TEACHING AFFECTED BY MOVEMENTS EVANGELICAL, SCIENTIFIC, AND CRITICAL.

I. EVANGELICISM.

THE distinguishing feature of Westminster Calvinism is the prominence given to the doctrines of grace. In the confessional symbol these doctrines occupy a central position. The unfolding of them begins at the chapter (vi.) which treats 'Of the Fall of Man, of Sin, and of the Punishment thereof,' and it extends to that (xviii.) which defines 'Assurance of Grace and Salvation'; so that thirteen of the thirty-three chapters which constitute the document are devoted to the scheme of Redemption.

The Westminster Confession is not only evangelical, it is also to a certain extent evangelistic. 'Sound preaching' is recognised in it as a part of religious worship, and as one of the ordinances in which the covenant of grace is dispensed;¹ the ministry, oracles, and ordinances which Christ has given to the catholic visible Church are for the gathering as well as the perfecting of the saints in this life;² 'repentance unto life is an evangelical grace,' and is to be preached by every minister of the gospel, it is that grace by which

¹ Chap. XXI. v.

² Chap. XXV. iii.

a sinner so grieves for and hates his sins as to turn from them all unto God, and 'it is every man's duty to endeavour to repent of his particular sins particularly';¹ and finally, in the Covenant of Grace, it is declared, the Lord 'freely offereth unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring of them faith in Him that they may be saved.'² These incidental statements, however, cannot in fairness be regarded as furnishing an adequate unfolding of Biblical Evangelicism. It must be admitted that the Westminster scheme of the doctrines of grace is so constructed as to be the concern of those of the human race who are ordained unto life, the 'predestinated unto life, and these only.' And so while the free offer of life and salvation is made unto sinners, as already stated, this restricting clause is immediately added, 'and [God] promising to give *unto all those that are ordained unto life* His Holy Spirit, to make them willing and able to believe.' Surely there is room and need here for a widening of the area of Evangelicism, such a widening as will justify evangelistic preaching and vindicate Christian missions.

It is noteworthy that the enlarging of the area came to Scotland from the same quarter as did the Westminster symbol, and that the one came very

¹ Chap. XV. i. ii. v.

² Chap. VII. iii. In the Shorter Catechism God's Spirit is represented as so working in Effectual Calling as to 'persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, *freely offered to us in the Gospel.*' (Q. 31.) And Faith in Jesus Christ is said to be a receiving and resting upon Him alone for Salvation, '*as He is offered to us in the Gospel.*' (Q. 86.)

shortly after the other. For on the first of May 1645 there issued from the press of a London publisher a treatise which had for title *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, and four years later there appeared Part Second of the same. In the Dialogue of both parts the chief speaker, first in the order of the title pages, is 'Evangelista, a Minister of the Gospel.'¹

In what year this puritan work on Evangelism found its way into Scotland has not been ascertained. This, however, is certain that in 1717 James Hog of Carnock reprinted the first part as it fell into his hands by what he styles 'a merciful and most unexpected disposure of providence.'

While Hog's reprint of *The Marrow* led to the English work becoming widely known and highly prized in Scotland, it also gave rise to a controversy which was carried on for many years and was fought with great keenness in pamphlets, in church committees and in ecclesiastical courts.² Eventually the

¹ *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*. In a Dialogue betwixt
Evangelista, a Minister of the Gospel.
Nomista, a Legalist.
Antinomista, an Antinomian.
And Neophytus, a young Christian. 1645.

The Marrow of Modern Divinity. The second part. In a Dialogue
betwixt
Evangelista, a Minister of the Gospell.
Nemologista, a pratler about the Law.
And Neophitus, a young Christian. 1649.

² For a detailed account of the Marrow Controversy see a series of articles in *Christian Instructor* for 1831-32 (vols. xxx. and xxxi.) by Dr Thomas M'Crie. Also article by present lecturer in *British and Foreign Evangelical Review* for Oct. 1884. 'Rev. James Hog of Carnock and Principal Hadow of St Andrews'; and his Introduction to edition of *The Marrow* published in 1902.

General Assembly of 1720 passed an Act in which the teaching of certain passages in the book was declared to be contrary to the Holy Scriptures, the Confession, and the Catechisms, and ministers were strictly forbidden to recommend the work, and were required to exhort their people not to read the same. In the Assembly of the following year a representation was laid on the table, petitioning for the repeal of this sentence. The ministers who signed the petition figure in Scottish Church History as the Marrow men, and being twelve in number they were styled by the humorists of the day, The Twelve Apostles. But it fared ill with the puritan product of English evangelism and with its upholders in Scotland when the final decision was given by the Assembly of 1722. The Act of 1720 was vindicated and confirmed, the twelve protesters were called to the bar, rebuked and admonished by the Moderator, and the Court refused either to hear or to record their protest in the minutes. In spite, however, of ecclesiastical opposition and condemnation the *Marrow* became one of the classics of Scottish evangelism, and found a place on the book-shelf of many a house north of the Tweed alongside of Rutherford's *Letters*, Guthrie's *Great Interest*, and Boston's *Four-fold State*. What is the distinctive note in the teaching of this puritan writing, which so commended and endeared it to such Scottish divines as Hog of Carnock, Boston of Ettrick, and Wilson of Maxton, author of the famous sermon on the Trust? The

question is easily answered. The doctrines of grace are presented as 'good, merry, glad and joyful tidings,' and the evangel of the grace of God finds summing up in an expression which has become historical. 'God the Father,' it is said, 'as He is in His Son Jesus Christ, moved with nothing but His free love to mankind lost, hath made a deed of gift and grant unto them all, that whosoever of them all shall believe in This His son shall not perish, but have eternal life.'¹ On the ground of this gift to all mankind the gospel commission is thus paraphrased: 'Go and tell every man without exception that here are good news for him; Christ is dead for him, and if he will take Him and accept of His righteousness he shall have Him.'²

Two of the twelve ministers who signed the Representation to the Assembly of 1721, and who a year later were rebuked for their vindication of Marrow doctrine were Ebenezer Erskine and his brother Ralph. These two Marrow men became, as every Scotsman knows, leaders of the Secession. In its condemnation of Marrow theology the Assembly charged its upholders with believing in universal redemption, because they spoke of God's deed of gift to all mankind as constituting the ground of the offer

¹ Chap. ii. sec. 12, 'God's Deed of Gift and Grant unto mankind Sinners,' p. 112. 1902 edition. The English Nonconformist Ezekiel Culverwell, who was suspended for not wearing the surplice, published *A Treatise of Faith* in 1623, which, in 1633, had passed through seven editions. In this treatise there occurs the expression 'a deed of gift and grant of His Son Christ Jesus unto mankind.'

² *Ibid.* pp. 112-13.

and the warrant for accepting it. In answer to this charge the Secession divines replied that they in common with all the Marrow men rejected the doctrine of universal salvation, and they were led to give fuller development to Westminster teaching regarding the redemption that is in Christ Jesus than had been done by their Calvinistic predecessors. The purchase and application of redemption, said they, are confined to the elect. But the warrant to receive Christ is common to all the sinful men and women of Adam's race. Gospel giving is not giving into possession, but giving by way of offer. Christ is the Saviour of the world. His salvation is a common salvation, in which lost mankind have a common interest, it being open to and warrantable for all to take possession of Christ and the whole of His salvation. And so the Seceders of 1742 acknowledged, declared and asserted, in language of their own, that 'there is a revelation of the Divine will in the Word, affording a warrant to offer Christ unto all mankind without exception, and a warrant to all freely to receive Him, however great sinners they are or have been.'¹

¹ 'The Presbytery did and hereby do . . . *acknowledge, declare, and assert*,—That God the Father, moved by nothing but his free love to mankind lost, hath made a deed of *gift* and *grant* of his Son Jesus Christ unto mankind in the word; that whosoever of them all shall receive this gift by a true and lively faith, shall not perish, but have everlasting life: or, which is the same thing, That,' etc. 'The Act concerning the Doctrine of Grace,' Article I. 'Of the injury done to the Doctrine of Grace, under the Head of Universal Atonement and Pardon.' Adam Gib's *Display*, vol. i. p. 181.

Methodism was the grandest fact and mightiest factor in the religious life of England all through the eighteenth century ; and English Methodism, through the evangelistic visits of its founders, Wesley and Whitefield, rendered noble service in keeping the lamp of evangelical truth burning and shining during the ascendancy of cold, dark Moderatism in Scotland.¹ And Congregationalism took an honourable share in that illuminating work, when the brothers Haldane and their associates pitched their 'Tabernacles' in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Dundee, and when, up and down the country, in Churches and Halls, when these were open to them, in market-places and open fields, when more suitable places were shut against them, they told the story of the Cross in all simplicity, with passionate earnestness.²

But before the movement which Robert and James Haldane had been instrumental in originating had spent its pristine force, another was at work more potent in its influence upon Evangelical Calvinism and Scottish Evangelism than either Methodism or Congregationalism.

In the autumn of 1810 Thomas Chalmers, minister

¹ Fullest information regarding Wesley and Whitefield's visits to Scotland is to be found in the *Journal* of the one and the *Diary and Correspondence* of the other, as also in Tyerman's *Lives* of the two eighteenth century evangelists. See also an admirable work by the most recent biographer of Leighton, *John Wesley and George Whitefield in Scotland or, The Influence of the Oxford Methodists on Scottish Religion*. By the Rev. D. Butler, M.A., 1898.

² J. A. Haldane, *Tour in the North of Scotland*, 1798. Robert Haldane, *Addresses on Religion in Scotland*, 1800. *Memoirs of Robert and J. A. Haldane*, 1853.

of Kilmany in the north of Fife, was laid aside by a severe illness. 'For four months he never left his room; for upwards of half a year he never entered his pulpit; it was more than a twelve-month before all the duties of his parish were again regularly discharged by him.¹ During that crisis of his life gracious influences were at work, with the result that he came out of the sick-chamber a changed man, a new creation in Christ Jesus. Ever after, till taken to his rest in 1847, Thomas Chalmers preached the doctrines of grace with overpowering fervour, and with a consecration of his splendid genius to the interests of evangelical truth which opened a new era in Scottish evangelicism. Our present concern, however, with our brilliant countryman is not with Chalmers the preacher, the Christian economist, or the churchman, it is simply with Chalmers the theologian. In 1828 he was transferred from the chair of Moral Philosophy in St Andrews to that of Divinity in Edinburgh, a position which he held till the Disruption when he resigned his chair in the University and accepted the appointment of Principal and Primarius Professor of Theology of the New College, Edinburgh. After lecturing for upwards of twelve years on the lines which writers on systematic theology had generally pursued Dr Chalmers commenced, in 1841, to recast his lectures. Years of profound thinking and of reverent study of God's Word had not altered the

¹ *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Thomas Chalmers, D.D., LL.D.* By William Hanna, LL.D., vol. i. p. 151.

creed of the author of the *Institutes*.¹ He continued to be a sincerely convinced Calvinist. He believed in and strenuously defended the theology of the Westminster divines as founded in Holy Scripture and in harmony with all he knew of the Divine economy of the universe and the constitution of human nature. At the same time, there is a startling difference between the Westminster *Confession of Faith* and Dr Chalmers's *Institutes of Theology*. The method of the two works is totally different. The nineteenth century theologian abandons the synthetic in favour of the analytic. His order is not that of beginning with the constitution of the Godhead, of proceeding onward through the successive footsteps of a history which commences with the original purposes of the uncreated mind, and terminates in the consummation of all things. It is that which 'proceeds chronologically in the natural order of human inquiry, beginning with the darkness, and the probabilities, and the wants of Natural Theology, and seeking first after these announcements that are most directly fitted to relieve the distress and to meet the difficulties of nature.'² 'The Subject-Matter' is handled in three successive parts. The first treats of the Disease for which a Divine Remedy is provided, the second of the Nature, and the third of the extent of the Gospel Remedy. The doctrine of Predestination is not taken up till the extent of the Remedy is

¹ *Institutes of Theology*, 2 vols. Posthumous work.

² *Ibid.* vol. i. chap. x.

discussed. And when it is dealt with how amazingly novel and fresh is the treatment! No formal definition is given, no time is spent in distinguishing the decree of Election from that of Reprobation, or in breaking up the latter into constituent parts. After an eloquent setting forth of the limit between the known and the unknown, the knowable and the unknowable on lines laid down by Lord Bacon, the lecturer connects the doctrine of predestination in theology with that of necessity in philosophy. Science, reasoning on the powers and properties of the creature, educes the doctrine of philosophical necessity; theology, resting her argument mainly on the powers and prerogatives of the Creator, educes her doctrine in another form and under another title—that of predestination. ‘It is one and the same doctrine in different aspects, or with different relations—in the one viewed with relation to nature, in the other with relation to God.’¹

Bringing his treatment of predestination to a close the nineteenth-century theologian alludes in a concluding paragraph to the characteristics of Scottish theology, describing it as ‘more profound and speculative than that of our Sister Kingdom, and tinged throughout all its articles with the metaphysical genius of our nation.’² He refers to the dismay with which our alleged gloomy and repulsive Calvinism is regarded by many in England and to the emphatic condemnation of ‘this awful predestination’—the

¹ *Institutes of Theology*, vol. i. p. 357.

² *Ibid.* p. 364.

harshest and most offensive feature of Scottish Calvinism. This aspersion of national theology Chalmers meets by pointing to the religious and moral state of the country at the time when that theology had strongest hold of the people. Then Scotland lifted throughout all her parishes a front erect among the nations of Christendom, not for the intelligence alone, but for the worth and practical virtues of her population. Any degeneracy in the present day does not arise from our having kept too closely by or having infused the minds of our people too deeply with the old theology. So far as that has had to do with the declension and decay the explanation is to be found in the meagre and superficial theology which, during near a century of withering and dreary Moderatism, had replaced the evangelism of other days.¹

But the *Institutes* of the Scottish Professor are not more remarkable for their treatment of the topics of systematic theology than for their exhibition of the doctrines of grace. The first part, dealing with the guilt, the depravity and the disease of human nature has for the theme of its closing chapter, 'The Practical and Pulpit treatment of the whole subject.' While holding the confessional view of the entire and universal corruption of fallen nature, Dr Chalmers pled for a recognition of virtue apart from Christianity and beyond the circle of its influences on the character and conduct of men. In the records of antiquity he found not merely the recognition but, in some instances,

¹ *Institutes of Theology*, vol. i. p. 365.

the observance of what is right. 'There was virtue in the continence of Scipio, in the self-devotion of Regulus, in the minds of Socrates and Plato. In the present day there is a native sense of integrity and honour in many a human bosom. There is a felt obligation in truth. There are not merely the instinctive, but the dutiful regards of kindred and companionship maintained by thousands in society, not because of the popularity which rewards them, but because of the principle which enjoins them, in the fulfilment of which there is the complacency of an approving, and in the transgression of which there would be the disquietude of a self-offended and therefore, a reclaiming conscience.¹ Then, in the handling of the doctrine of the Imputation of Adam's sin Chalmers urged his students not to charge men with 'the guilt of a transaction which took place thousands of years ago,' but to bring home to them the guilt of sins which their own hands have committed and of a sinfulness which vitiates every affection and desire of their own hearts.

It is unnecessary to deal in detail with the other parts of the *Institutes*. Enough to say that, whether expatiating on the preaching of Christ crucified as the great vehicle for the lessons of a full and free gospel, on the warrant which each man has to appropriate the calls of the gospel to himself, or on the Universality of the Gospel, the great divine of the nineteenth century is intensely practical and insistently earnest

¹ *Institutes of Theology*, vol. i. p. 366.

in pleading with gospel preachers to make the doctrine of the Atonement the first article in their exhibition of the restorative system of the Gospel, to make proclamation, even 'under the scowl of a misunderstood theology,' of a free gospel in the hearing of all and for the acceptance of all, to make it clear to their hearers that there is nothing in the doctrine of Predestination which should at all limit the universality of the gospel offer, for, to use his own characteristic words, 'in no place of the Bible is pardon addressed to any man on the footing that he is one of the elect ; but in all places of the Bible pardon is addressed to every man on the footing that he is one of the species.'¹

For more reasons than one, Thursday the 18th of May 1843 is a red-letter day in the ecclesiastical annals of Scotland. On that day there took place the Disruption, when, with Thomas Chalmers for leader, the Church of Scotland Free set out upon her career as a Church separate from State connection and State control. That same 18th of May was also the last of three days occupied with the formation of the Evangelical Union. For the purpose of constituting that Union there met in Kilmarnock four ministers, all of whom had ceased to be in the ministry of the United Secession Church, one theological student, and a number of elders, delegates from the charges of the ministers. Into the details of the origin of the Evangelical Union we are not called upon to enter,

¹ *Institutes of Theology*, vol. i. p. 407.

neither is it necessary for us to trace the subsequent history of the denomination.¹ Our concern is with the departure from the confessional theology of Scotland which the founders of the Union inaugurated. At two stages of its history they formulated a statement of its distinctive doctrines. First. At the time of formation in 1843 the Rev. James Morison, the able and erudite champion of the cause, produced a summary of principles which he and his clerical associates regarded as their creed, although they repudiated the idea that it was to be taken as a standard or as a test and term of communion. In this document there is a distinct advance made by the compilers upon the position which they took up when at the bar of the court which suspended or deposed them. Up to this time they maintained that they did not deviate from 'the main scope' of the Westminster Confession, while they did not consider themselves as bound to every minute aspect and detail to be found in the symbol they had subscribed. And so they accepted the position of the Marrow men and the first Seceders, which they erroneously affirmed is not in the Westminster Confession, the position that God the Father, out of His love to mankind lost, has made a deed of gift and grant unto all. But in reality they went further than

¹ For a full and sympathetic account of the origin and formation of the ecclesiastical society see Dr Fergus Ferguson's *History of the Evangelical Union. From its Origin to the Present Time.* Glasgow, 1876. Valuable information is also contained in two biographies of more recent date both from the pen of William Adamson, D.D.—*The Life of the Rev. James Morison, D.D.*, 1898, and *The Life of the Rev. Fergus Ferguson, D.D.*, 1900.

the Bostons and the Erskines of the eighteenth century. For the Morisonians held that our Lord in dying sustained no special relation to elect persons, but was the substitute of the whole human race, that his Atonement was made equally and in every sense for all men, and that the Divine purpose of atonement was prior in the order of nature to election, God having appointed it, not to secure the salvation of any, but to render the salvation of all possible. This is certainly not Calvinism, not even qualified Calvinism. And yet it is not the position of thorough Arminianism. For up to the date of the first statement all the four founders of the Evangelical Union believed in a limitation of Christ's Atonement in respect of its application. In his earliest publication—an eighteen-page tract, entitled, *The Question, What must I do to be saved? answered*, James Morison had given the following 'harmony' of doctrines: 'God foresaw that all men would become hell-deserving sinners; He resolved, in consequence of His ineffable love and pity, to provide an atonement sufficient for the salvation of all; He resolved to offer this atonement to all, so that all should be able and all should be welcome to come and accept it as all their salvation: He foresaw, however, that not one of the whole human family would *be willing* to be saved in this way, and then He elected. That all might not be lost, that Jesus might see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied, He resolved to bestow on some such influences of His Spirit as would infallibly dispose them to accept what all others are

able and welcome to take.'¹ The Morisonians were thus what they charged their Calvinistic brethren with being—they were 'limitarians,' for along with a universal Atonement and a universal offer they taught a limited destination through the effectual application of the former by the Holy Spirit to the unconditionally elect.

The position was not a satisfactory one. Both Robert Morison at Bathgate and his son James at Kilmarnock felt it to be unsatisfactory.² The first, however, to give logical consistency and completeness to the Evangelical Union doctrinal basis was the Rev. John Kirk. Mr Kirk entered upon ministerial work as a Congregationalist at Hamilton, but, at the time of the expulsion of nine students from the Congregational Theological Academy, both minister and people joined the Evangelical Union. In 1845 Mr Kirk was inducted to the pastorate of an important charge at Edinburgh, and subsequently was appointed Professor of Practical Theology, in the Theological Academy of the Union. A year before the publication of the *Statement* Professor Kirk delivered twelve lectures on twelve doctrinal theses, and when the course was completed the lectures were published in a volume entitled *The Way of Life made Plain*.

¹ *History of the Evangelical Union*, p. 22.

² In the case of James Morison dissatisfaction with his limitarianism is said to have originated in the remark of a hearer to the effect, 'You told us yesterday that God did not spare His Son, but gave Him up for us all. It is very strange that He did not spare His Son and yet spared His Spirit, especially when the Apostle says, How shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?' *History, ut sup.* p. 281.

Setting out with the proposition that 'the doctrine that Christ did not die for all men is opposed to the Gospel,' the author concluded with these two theses: 'The will of the Holy Spirit is that all men should be saved; Hearers of the gospel who are finally lost are condemned for discrediting that which they need no help to believe.' The framers of the Kilmarnock manifesto accepted these positions and embodied them in their *Statement of Principles* issued in 1843.

Second. The other doctrinal declaration of the Evangelical Union was issued by the Conference which met in 1858.¹ In this document sixteen doctrines are stated as characteristic and representative of the Evangelical Union school of theology. Prominence is given to the universality of Grace and the conditionality of Salvation. The work of the third Person in the Trinity is regarded as universal, as much so as the love of the Father or the Atonement of the Son. The last subject treated of is styled Election and Reprobation. In the case of the former it is admitted that the views of Evangelical Unionists are in marked and decided contrast to those of Westminster theology. Morisonian election is not unconditional; it is simply a selecting process, not an absolute and

¹The drafting of the doctrinal declaration of 1858 was the work of the Rev. Dr John Guthrie, ordained minister of the United Secession Church at Kendal in 1839, one of the four clerical founders of the Union, and in the latter part of his ministry pastor of an Evangelical Union charge in Glasgow.

sovereign decree; it is not a decree of eternity but a decision in time; it is not an election to, but an election through faith; it is something which it is the duty and within the power of every man to secure. Reprobation is also conditioned. It finds a place not before but at the end of a sinner's career. There is nothing in it of foredooming of any one considered as a creature, a sinner, or even as a rejecter of the gospel. The subject of it is that human being on whom has been expended the last resources of a wise benevolence, and who is reprobated as one who has proved himself incorrigible and finally impenitent. Such is the blend of Pelagianism and Arminianism which the fathers of the Evangelical Union compounded and propounded in room of the diluted Calvinism which marked their first divergence from Westminster theology.

The new theology has not supplanted that which the Morisons, the Fergusons, the Guthries, and the Kirks so sweepingly and scornfully rejected. One, however, of these men, although he did not alter the trend of Scottish Theology, certainly enriched the stores of our national literature. James Morison, the leader of the movement and the founder of the Union, was a man of great intellectual ability and of fine scholarship. In the exercise of a remarkable acquisitive faculty he attained a mastery of New Testament exposition, and his own commentaries, admirable alike for their presentation of the results of wide study and for the balanced judgment of the

author's own interpretation, have secured for him a place of honour in the ranks of Scottish exegetes.

In a way quite unintentional on his part Dr Morison rendered the Church from which he was cut off a signal service by involving her in a prolonged and heated strife, which at times threatened to rend the United Secession Church in pieces, but which ultimately resulted in a liberalising of the tone and a widening of the horizon of Secession theology. The strife originated in the proceedings of the Synod in the case of James Morison ; more particularly, it rose out of the part taken in these proceedings by two of the professors of the denomination.

Dr John Brown, professor of Exegetical Theology, cherished a warm regard for his former student, and it was surmised by some people that to some extent the teacher had been the means of leading the pupil into the divergent position he ultimately occupied. The suspicion was strengthened by the line the professor took in 1841. Deeming it his duty to caution the Church against extreme and violent measures he published a pamphlet containing a collection of extracts from his own writings bearing on the controverted points, and to the June number of the denominational Magazine he contributed an article in the form of Notes, chiefly historical, on the question respecting the extent of the reference of the death of Christ.¹ When the

¹ *Opinions on Faith, Divine Influence, Human Inability, The Design and Effect of the death of Christ, Assurance, and the Sonship of Christ, expressed*

Synod met in Glasgow on the 7th of June and the case of Morison was dealt with Dr Brown pleaded for a milder treatment than was extended to the accused, and dissented from the sentence pronounced upon him. Dr Brown's fellow-sufferer in the Atonement controversy was his friend and colleague Dr Robert Balmer, professor of Systematic Theology. The Rev. Mr Walker of Comrie had been suspended by his presbytery on a charge of heresy similar to that brought against Mr Morison. But the same Synod which condemned the tendencies and language of the latter acquitted the former because he gave his assent to propositions which asserted the salvation of the elect in consequence of the special relation of the Atonement to them, and at the same time affirmed that the mediation of the Saviour opened a door of mercy to mankind-sinners. When Mr Walker's case was before the court Professor Balmer pleaded successfully for the exercise of forbearance, making skilful use of a sentence from the writings of the great American Calvinist, Jonathan Edwards, to the effect that, however Christ in some sense may be said to die for all, and to redeem all visible Christians, yea, the whole world by His death, yet there must be something *particular* in the design of His death, with respect to such as He intended should actually be saved

in the published writings of John Brown, D.D., 1841. The second edition contains additional Notes and the Article from the United Secession Magazine.

thereby.¹ In the following year Dr Balmer supplied the preface to a reprint of an English treatise on *The Divine Will*. The writer of the treatise was Edward Polhill, who was called to the bar in 1638, but who occupied himself with the care of his property in Sussex, and devoted his leisure time to writing religious Calvinistic treatises. The Berwick reprint of Polhill's tractate deals with *The Extent of the Death of Christ*, and the thesis maintained is that Christ died in some sort for all men, and by virtue of His death all men, if believers, should equally be saved; nevertheless Christ did not die equally for them all, but after a special manner for the elect, above and beyond all others. In his prefatory remarks Professor Balmer claimed liberty to use the term 'universal atonement'; but for the present, he recommended students and young ministers to make reserved and sparing use of the expression, an advice which he thought could be all the more readily complied with, seeing that, in all probability, the time was not distant when the employment of the term would give no offence to any one. The action, advice, and suggestion of the Professor intensified the uneasiness and deepened the suspicion already working among the stricter theologians in the Secession, and led the Synod at its meeting in 1843 to grant the prayer addressed to it that a committee of the whole House should be held for conference, and that the two senior Professors be requested to be

¹ *The Freedom of the Will*. Conclusion.

present and to express their sentiments on the doctrinal matters then agitating the Church.

After the two incriminated divines had spoken—Dr Balmer at great length, Dr Brown more briefly—the Court came to the conclusion that, on explanations, supposed diversities of sentiment in a great measure disappeared; in particular, that on the two aspects of the Atonement there was entire harmony, all holding that in making the Atonement the Saviour sustained special covenant relations to the elect, that he had a special love to them and infallibly secured their everlasting salvation; and that His obedience unto the death afforded such a satisfaction to the justice of God as that, on the ground of it, in consistency with His character and law the door of mercy is opened to all men, and a full and free salvation is presented for their acceptance. Appended to the resolution was a recommendation addressed to ministers and preachers calling upon them to abstain from the use of such ambiguous phrases as ‘universal atonement,’ ‘limited atonement’ and of all expressions that may seem opposed either to the special relations of the atonement on the one hand, or to its general relations on the other.¹

¹ *History of the Atonement Controversy in connexion with the Secession Church, from its origin to the present time.* By the Rev. A. Robertson, Stow, 1846, pp. 181-83. The committee which drafted the resolution had only made mention of ‘universal atonement’ as an instance of ambiguity in the use of terms. It was on an amendment proposed in the Synod that ‘limited atonement’ was also specified. The last clause in the recommendation, beginning with ‘and of all expressions’ is also an enlargement of the committee’s draft. Principal Cairns remarks

As the speeches of the professors had been made with closed doors they deemed it due to themselves to publish their defences, the statement in both cases being supplemented with notes.¹ That re-opened the controversy in a still more acute form. Dr Andrew Marshall of Kirkintilloch, an able man and an acute controversialist, who had taken a prominent part in the proceedings against James Morison in 1841, transferred his attention to the two professors. In 1845 he issued a pamphlet devoted to *Remarks on the Statements of the two Professors*, in which he brought grave charges against Drs Balmer and Brown. The charges were persisted in even after the maker of them had been admonished at the bar of the Synod, and Dr Marshall was compelled to proceed against Dr Brown (Dr Balmer died in 1845) by way of libel. This was carried out at a special meeting of Synod held in July 1845. On the day appointed the Supreme Court met in Broughton Place Church, Edinburgh, of which Dr Brown was senior minister; and the unique spectacle was witnessed of a professor appearing in his own church, at the bar of the Synod, to answer charges of heresy brought against him by two clerical brethren.

The libel of Dr Marshall of Kirkintilloch and Dr that not a little of the conciliatory effect of the conference and of the general resolution was lost in the keen debate which followed, and that the insertion of 'limited atonement' was only carried after much resistance. *Memoir of John Brown, D.D.*, pp. 237-38.

¹ *Statement on certain doctrinal Points, made Oct. 5, 1843, before the United Associate Synod, at their request.* By their two senior professors, Robert Balmer, D.D., and John Brown, D.D., 1844.

Hay of Kinross contained five counts or charges. The third of the five brought up the disputed point of the extent of the Atonement. It charged Dr Brown with holding that Christ has not died for the elect only, or made satisfaction for their sins only, but that He died for all men and made atonement or satisfaction for the sins of all men, which is contrary to the teaching of the Westminster Confession. The answer of the libelled professor to this charge was embodied in the statement more than once uttered by him: The proposition, Christ died for men has been employed in three senses. In the sense that He died with the intention and to the effect of securing salvation, I hold that He died for the Elect alone: in the sense that He died to procure easier terms of salvation and grace, to enable men to comply with these terms, I hold that He died for no man: in the sense that He died to remove legal obstacles in the way of human salvation and open a door of mercy, I hold that He died for all men. On this count of the libel Dr Brown was acquitted unanimously, and the motion that became the finding of the Synod affirmed that he expressly rejected the Arminian doctrine of universal redemption, and that he held the doctrine of the Reformers, of the Subordinate Standards, and of previous decisions of the Secession Church, according to which the death of Christ, viewed in connection with covenant engagements, secures the salvation of the elect only, while a foundation has been laid in His death for a full, sincere, and consistent offer of

the gospel to all mankind.¹ After acquitting Dr Brown on each of the five counts the Synod passed a general and unanimous resolution finding that there never existed any ground even for suspicion that the panel held any opinion on the points under review inconsistent with the Word of God or the Subordinate Standards of the Secession Church.²

The debates in the Synod convocations from 1841 to 1845, often heated, but always displaying ability and learning, the ecclesiastical manifestoes issued in the course of the controversy,³ and the copious pamphlet literature which marked its progress—all these worked for good, direct and indirect. They reminded preachers—in the case of some they informed them—of the scholastic distinction between Christ dying *pro omnibus*, and dying *pro ecclesia specialiter; sufficienter pro omnibus* and *efficaciter pro electis*. They familiarised them with the difference between

¹ Robertson's *Hist.*, *ut sup.*, pp. 259-60.

² *Ibid.* pp. 287-88. *Memoir of John Brown, D.D.* By John Cairns, D.D. Chap. vii. 1860.

³ In 1842 the Synod of the United Secession Church approved of a *Statement of Principles*. In this declaration it is affirmed that the doctrine of the Secession has uniformly been 'that the atonement of Christ has *general relations* to the world, and that the general reference of the atonement must have had a place in the Everlasting purpose of God, as well as its *special relation* to the Elect.' In the same year, after the suspension of the Rev. Robert Morison of Bathgate the Synod issued another brief statement called *Doctrinal Errors condemned by the United Associate Synod*. The leading assertions condemned are: That Christ in dying had no special love to His people, and that, while the Atonement has a general reference and opens the door of mercy to all, yet it secures the salvation of none.

the general reference, relation, or aspect, and the peculiar or special reference of the death of Christ. They brought into use the expressions that by the Divine appointment our Lord's death removes legal and external barriers or obstacles, and opens the door of mercy to mankind, and that by the true and complete satisfaction of His sacrifice Christ has placed all in a salvable state, rendering salvation open to all. Secession authors and preachers have always held that there is a sense in which it is permissible for a Calvinist to speak of the universal atonement and to affirm that Christ died for all men. By the time, however, the Atonement controversy was closed the consensus of opinion was in favour of dropping such phrases as 'universal' or 'limited' Atonement, 'Christ died for all,' on the ground, not that they were positively erroneous, but that they were ambiguous and might convey to some a meaning not in the minds of those who employed them. And so, when the Secession emerged from the strife of tongues and the battle of pamphlets which extended over a four years' conflict, she was found doing what she had been doing in the best days of her history, she was found maintaining 'with equal firmness the doctrine of personal election and particular salvation, and the doctrine of the unlimited calls and invitations of the gospel.'¹

¹ *Opinions, ut sup.*, Note E. 77

II. SCIENCE.

One of the shortest chapters in the Westminster Confession is the fourth—‘Of Creation.’ But the first section of that brief chapter has given rise to controversy scarcely, if at all, less keen and protracted than that which has gathered round the eight sections of the preceding one, which treats of ‘God’s Eternal Decree.’ The controversy in this case has not been between one school of theology and another; it has been between scientists and theologians. There has been, and unhappily there still is, to some extent, such a misunderstanding as justifies the writing of treatises upon *The Conflict between Religion and Science*, *The Warfare of Science*¹—a warfare which, according to one of the disputants, began centuries ago when theologians intervened to superintend the methods of scientific investigations and insisted that the Biblical record must be taken as a standard to determine scientific results. How far Westminster theologians are responsible for the conflict may appear if it is ascertained to what positions regarding the phenomena of nature they have committed themselves and those who subscribe their symbol.

The leading affirmations in the Confession on the subject of Creation are these. First. It pleased the

¹ *History of the Conflict between Religion and Science*. By J. W. Draper, M.D., LL.D., Professor in the University of New York.

The Warfare of Science. By A. D. White, LL.D., Cornell University. With Prefatory Note by Prof. Tyndall. 1876.

Pioneers of Evolution. By Edward Clodd. Part ii. ‘The Arrest of Inquiry.’

Godhead, in the beginning, to create, or make of nothing, the world, and all things therein, whether visible or invisible; and to create man, male and female, after all other creatures had been made. Second. God completed His creation work in the space of six days.¹ It will be observed that the ground covered by these two statements is of limited extent. Nothing is advanced in either of them regarding the age of the world or the antiquity of the human race. Prior to 1884, when the Revised Version of the Old Testament was issued, publishers of the English Bible were in the habit of placing 'B.C. 4004' at the top of the first page. That date was taken from Archbishop Ussher's system of Biblical chronology.² But from the time of Sir Charles Lyell, the highest authority in the nineteenth century upon the geological formation of the earth, the chronology of the Irish prelate has been discredited and abandoned. Astronomers undertake to describe the climatic condition of our globe 200,000 years ago; geologists postulate a period of not less than two hundred millions of years in order to account for the phenomena of their science; and biologists write quite calmly of millions of animals becoming sentient some hundreds of millions of years ago.³ Now, so far as the Westminster Confession is

¹ Chap. iv. 1.

² *Annales Veteris et Novi Testamenti*. 1650-54.

³ 'Some hundreds of millions of years ago some millions of millions of animals must be supposed to have become sentient.' *Thoughts on Religion*. By G. J. Romanes. Edited by Bishop Charles Gore, D.D. Tenth Impression, p. 77.

concerned a subscriber to the symbol may favour any view he pleases regarding the age of the world, for the document he owns as his creed commits him to no system of chronology, traditional or scientific.

The same remark applies to the relations of the heavenly bodies to each other, and the position of our earth among these bodies. The theological and traditional theory on that subject was that the earth is the centre, round which revolve the sun and the planets. This geocentric supposition, endorsed with the names of Ptolemy and Thomas Aquinas, held the field till the beginning of the sixteenth century, and then a Polish scholar, Nicholas Kopernik by name, broached the view that the sun is the centre round which the earth and planets revolve. The hostility towards the Copernican discovery on the part of ecclesiastics and theologians both papal and protestant,¹ and the cruel treatment of its champion, Galileo, need not be described, as the world may be said to know the story by heart. The point to be noted is that whether the relations of the heavenly bodies are geocentric or heliocentric is a question regarding which the seventeenth-century symbol does not pronounce an opinion. Personally the framers of the Confession may have adhered to the Ptolemaic theory, or they may have favoured the Copernican system, germs of which have been found in the

¹ Luther denounced Copernicus as 'an upstart astrologer' and 'a fool' who wished to reverse the entire science of astronomy; and mild Melancthon accused him of 'a want of honesty and decency' in asserting such notions publicly

writings of a remote age.¹ But collectively they maintained a discreet silence, and abstained from making a private opinion an article of the common faith.

Coming now to the affirmations of the Confession in the chapter on Creation, as already stated, the first to be controverted is the declaration as to the time over which God's work of creating extended. God created 'the world and all things therein, whether visible or invisible, *in the space of six days,*' say the Westminster divines, with an evident reference to the narrative in the opening of *Genesis*, and reproducing, in almost the exact words, an expression in the law of the Ten Words as given in the book of *Exodus*.²

The term 'days' as it occurs in the above statement, can be taken in no other acceptation than the current, popular one according to which a day is a time period of twenty-four hours. But since the date of the Westminster Assembly man's knowledge of nature has made great advance; and that department of physical science which arranges and classifies the strata and the soils of the earth dates no further back than the beginning of the last century. The first Scotsman who read the Genesis narrative in the light of Geology was Thomas Chalmers. In 1804, when twenty-four years of age, the clerical scientist

¹ *Astronomy of the Ancients.* By Sir G. C. Lewis. *Intellectual Development of Europe.* By J. W. Draper.

² *Genesis*, chap. i. *Exodus*, xx. 11.

taught chemistry in St Andrews. In the course of his prelections he took occasion to refer to the kindred science, the object of which, he declared, is to exhibit the arrangement of the materials of which the earth is composed, to conjecture the various changes which have taken place on the surface of the globe, and to pursue the history of its physical revolutions. It has been said of the speculations of the geologist, remarked the clerical lecturer, that they nurture infidel propensities, that by referring the origin of the globe to a higher antiquity than is assigned to it in the writings of Moses Geology undermines our faith in the inspiration of the Bible. This he emphatically declared to be a false alarm, and added what would then be regarded as bold words, 'The writings of Moses do not fix the antiquity of the globe. If they fix anything at all, it is only the antiquity of the species.'¹ Ten years later, in a review of Cuvier's *Essay on the Theory of the Earth*, Chalmers propounded a scheme for harmonising the facts of geology with the statements of Genesis. According to this reading of the two records the primary creation of the heavens and the earth formed no part of the six days' work. It took place 'in the beginning,' and the Scripture record of it is in the opening verse of Genesis. This primary Creation geologists and biologists may place as far back as they please. Between it and the first day's creating chronicled in the third, fourth and fifth verses of the

¹ *Memoirs*, vol. i. chap. iii. pp. 80-81.

first chapter, periods of vast duration may have intervened. The first half of the second verse—‘the earth was without form and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep—’ describes the state of things subsequent to the primary creation and prior to the creating work of the first day; while the second half—‘And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters—’ indicates the commencement of the Divine Creative activity.¹

But the lecturer and reviewer had nothing to propound regarding the days of Creation described in the book of the beginnings. He saw no difficulty in regarding them as natural days of twenty-four hours.

In the course of time, however, geology made such advances that naturalists became increasingly scrupulous about holding the traditional view of the creation days of Scripture. Then there stepped forth another Scot worthy of a place among the front-rank men of the century in which Burns and Scott, Carlyle and Chalmers played their part. In 1854 Hugh Miller read a lecture in London to which he gave the title: *The two Records, Mosaic and Geological*. That was followed up by a volume on *The Testimony of the Rocks*, which contained the earlier lecture, and in which the lecture had for sequel a paper upon *The Mosaic Vision of Creation*.²

¹ *Memoirs*, vol. i. chap. iii. pp. 385-87.

² *The Testimony of the Rocks, or, Geology in its bearing on the two theologies, natural and revealed*, 1857. The over-wrought author spent a part of the last day of his earthly life in correcting the proofs of this work.

In these writings the geologist of *The Old Red Sandstone* unfolded what may be called the prophetic vision theory of the six days mentioned in the opening of Genesis.¹ Starting from the admission of certain Hebraists that the days there mentioned may be taken to stand for successive periods of indefinite extent he raised the question, what was the form and nature of the revelation by which the pre-Adamic history of the earth was originally conveyed to man? Was it in narrative description, dictated to the inspired penman, or was it by a succession of visions or tableaux, passing before the eye of the mind, while the eye of the body was sealed? The latter method is that of prophecy by vision or inward eye-witnessing, and it is the one which Hugh Miller favoured. The revelation being by vision the description is optical, that not of an ear but of an eye-witness. And so the appearance and disappearance of each vision *seemed* to the seer as a morning and an evening, marked by an increase and decrease of light, like morning and

¹ Hugh Miller did not claim the vision theory of the Mosaic creation as his own. He credited Milton with it, referring to that magnificent episode in *Paradise Lost* in which Michael causes to pass before Adam a series of pictures comprising the future history of the world, successive pictures forming and then dissolving 'in the visions of God.' (Books xi. xii.) He also quoted from Kurtz, who in his *Bibel und Astronomie* (1849) contends that the Genesis narrative ought to be read in the light of the prophetic rule of exposition. And finally, he mentioned two works of his own time—*The Mosaic Record in harmony with the Geological*, and, *The Genesis of the Earth and of Man*. Of the former of these—'a singularly ingenious little work'—Miller made considerable use, while careful to note that the lecture on *The Two Records* was published in a separate form before its appearance, and that the writer of the book quotes largely from the lecturer.

evening twilight. Each 'day' stands for the period during which the divinely enlightened imagination of the prophet was active. And so the days of the Genesis record are removed from the province of the historian to that of the seer, they are simply the measures of the apparent time during which the successive scenes were exhibited. These visions were also symbolic of bye-gone periods, each period being characterised by its own productions and events; they were 'modules' of a graduated scale of Creation. Having elaborated his theory the Scottish geologist who was dowered with 'the vision and the faculty divine; yet wanting the accomplishment of verse,' proceeded to construe the first chapter of Genesis in harmony with it. With what dramatic vividness and poetic beauty the scientific poet and practical naturalist worked his way through the creation 'days' of the Hebrew seer can be gathered from this opening description of the creative visions. 'Let us suppose that it took place far from man, in an untrodden recess of the Midian desert, ere yet the vision of the burning bush had been vouchsafed; and that, as in the vision of St John in Patmos, voices were mingled with scenes, and the ear as certainly addressed as the eye. A 'great darkness' first falls upon the prophet, like that which in an earlier age fell upon Abraham, but without the 'horror'; and, as the Divine Spirit moves on the face of the widely troubled waters, as a visible aurora enveloped by the pitchy cloud, the great doctrine is orally enunciated, that 'in the beginning

God created the heavens and the earth.' Unreckoned ages, condensed in the vision into a few brief moments, pass away; the creative voice is again heard, 'Let there be light,' and straightway a gray diffused light springs up in the east, and casting its sickly gleam over a cloud-limited expanse of steaming vaporous sea, journeys through the heavens toward the west. One heavy sunless day is made the representative of myriads; the faint light waxes fainter,—it sinks beneath the dim undefined horizon; the first scene of the drama closes upon the seer; and he sits awhile on his hill-top in darkness, solitary but not sad, in what seems to be a calm and starless night.'¹

A modification of the theory of pictorial, symbolic days was attempted by that gifted Scot, William Gray Elmslie, whose sun went down at noon in a clear day. Two years before his death Professor Elmslie wrote an article on, *The First Chapter of Genesis*. In the course of the paper he expresses the conviction that if only the figment of a supposed physical order is abandoned the difficulty of the 'days,' will vanish. The employment of the term 'day,' he maintains, is not literal, but ideal and pictorial. On the other hand, the 'days' do *not* stand for geological epochs or periods, with which they have no scientific correspondence. The meaning underlying the use of 'days' is to be found in this that through them the great sections of Nature are made to pass in a panorama of pictures, each section being represented as the distinct

¹ *Testimony of the Rocks*. Lec. iv. pp. 170-74. 1897 edition.

act of God, and each picture being enclosed in a frame, clear cut and complete.¹

There are other variations of the vision theory and of the theory of days symbolic of periods, æons, or eras, which it is unnecessary to examine in detail.² Of none of them can it be said that they are more successful than those of Miller and Elmslie in removing the difficulties which will always beset the attempt to reconcile the order in Genesis with the order of Geology.³ The more one is acquainted with the attempts to bring the Mosaic Record into harmony with the geological the more impressed does one become with the wisdom displayed in 1879, when the Declaratory Act of a large section of the Church of Scotland allowed liberty of opinion to its office-bearers 'on such points in the Standards, not entering into the substance of the faith, as, the interpretation

¹ *Contemporary Review*. December 1887. Reprinted in *Prof. W. G. Elmslie, D.D., Memoir and Sermons*. 1890.

² E. Gr. The Schemes of Professors Dana and Guyot. See *Christian Faith in an Age of Science*. By W. N. Rice, 1904, pp. 101-10.

³ For a comprehensive and discriminating survey of the theories regarding the Cosmogony of Genesis from the exegetical and doctrinal standpoint see *The Book of Genesis. With Introduction and Notes*. By S. R. Driver, D.D. *Westminster Commentaries*. 1904. The general position reached by Prof. Driver is expressed in the following extract. 'The Cosmogony of Genesis is treated in popular estimation as an integral element of the Christian faith. This is not the case. A definition of the process by which, after the elements composing it were created, the world assumed its present condition forms no article in the Christian Creed. The Church has never pronounced with authority upon the interpretation of the narrative of Genesis. It is consequently open to the Christian teacher to understand it in the sense which science will permit, and it becomes his duty to ascertain what that sense is.' . . . The first chapter of Genesis 'neither comes into collision with science, nor needs reconciliation with it,' p. 33.

of the 'six days' in the Mosaic account of the creation.¹

The other leading affirmation in the fourth chapter of the Westminster Confession is to the effect that it pleased the Godhead, 'in the beginning, to create, or make of nothing, the world, and all things therein, whether visible or invisible,' and that, 'after God had made all other creatures, He created man, male and female, with reasonable and immortal souls.'²

Those who penned that statement were acquainted with a speculation respecting Nature according to which phenomena similar to those exhibited by the present world have always existed; in other words, there has never been such a thing as a beginning, that being not only unnecessary but also unthinkable.³ With that speculation the Westminster symbol does not concern itself, and modern thought has ruled it out of court as both unscriptural and unscientific.

There is, however, a theory regarding the past history and present state of Nature with which

¹ *Declaratory Act of United Presbyterian Church*, 1879. Article vii.

² Chap. IV. 1, ii.

³ 'All modern research tends to show that the various combinations of matter are formed of some *prima materia*. But its ultimate nature remains unknown. Out of nothing comes nothing. Modern science knows nothing of a beginning, and, moreover, holds it to be unthinkable. In this it stands in direct opposition to the theological dogma that God created the universe out of nothing; a dogma still accepted by the majority of Protestants and binding on Roman Catholics. . . . Life arose out of non-living matter. Although modern biology leaves the origin of life as an insoluble problem, it supports the theory of fundamental continuity between the inorganic and the organic.' Clodd's *Pioneers of Evolution*, Part i., 'From Thales to Lucretius.' Third Impression, 1904, p. 21.

seventeenth-century theologians could not be familiar, for the simple reason that it was not evolved with anything of completeness till nearly two hundred years after their day. A past-master in lucidity and accuracy of statement has thus formulated that hypothesis. 'It assumes,' wrote Professor Huxley, 'that the present state of things has had but a limited duration, but it supposes that this state has been *evolved* by a natural process from an antecedent state, and that from another, and so on.'¹

It will be observed that in this definition of Evolution nothing is assumed and nothing is denied as to a personal Purpose or Will directing the natural process. That is a different, a prior or subsequent question, with which scientific evolution does not concern itself. According to such evolutionists as Darwin, Wallace and Huxley there has never been in Nature sudden catastrophe or violent cataclysm; there is no breach, no gap, no leap; all is conservation of energy, all is continuity of process and development. Evolutionary astronomy reports no breach of continuity in the formation of planets; evolutionary geology reports none in the development of the earth's physical features; evolutionary biology reports no break in the origin of species, and probably none in the origin of life itself.

The evolutionary hypothesis of creation as applied to the departments of geology and zoology was forced upon the notice of Scottish naturalists in 1841, when

¹ *Lectures on Evolution.* By T. H. Huxley. 1876.

there appeared an anonymous work under the taking title, *Vestiges of Creation*.¹ The book does not profess to be a record of original research, nor does it claim to be the production of a specialist in natural science. English authorities in geology and biology criticised it in terms of emphatic condemnation;² while north of the Tweed one of the most strenuous opponents of the *Vestiges* was Hugh Miller. In his *Footprints of the Creator*³ the Scottish geologist subjected the hypothesis of creation by law as stated by the French naturalist Lamarck and supported by Chambers the Scot to a rigorous examination. It was in the interests of religion, natural and revealed, that the author of *The Old Red Sandstone* brought his gravest charges against the teaching and the tendency of the *Vestiges*. While admitting that there was no positive avowal of atheism in the work, he affirmed that it was at least practically tantamount to atheism, seeing that a renunciation of belief in indirect interference on the part of Deity in the work of creation forms a prominent and characteristic

¹ It was not till 1884 that it became authoritatively known, in connection with the publication of the 12th edition, that Mr Robert Chambers of the Edinburgh publishing firm was the writer of the book.

² Professor Sedgwick reviewed the *Vestiges* unfavourably in the *Edinburgh Review*, July 1845; Darwin, admitting the excellency of style and arrangement, regarded the geology of the book as bad, and the zoology as worse; and Huxley confessed the work irritated him by 'its prodigious ignorance' and the 'thoroughly unscientific habit' of the writer's mind.

³ *Footprints of the Creator, or The Asterolepis of Stromness*. The edition of 1896 contains *Memoir* by Louis Agassiz, and *Prefatory Remarks* by Mrs Miller.

feature of the scheme. And as regards Christianity Hugh Miller argued that according to the development theory an economy of recovery and restoration was rendered quite unnecessary, the appearance of a second Adam was a meaningless anomaly in view of the upward progress of the first, and Christianity became, what moderate divines of a past day used to make it, an idle and unsightly excrescence in a code of morals that would be perfect were it away.¹ Over against these charges there ought, in all fairness, to be placed the explicit recognition in the *Vestiges* of the Creator and Ruler of the universe, of whose modes of action nature and law are only descriptive terms. It ought to be borne in mind that the system unfolded in the history of the world is regarded as one in which not only all is regularity and order, but all flows from and is obedient to a Divine Code of laws, that this system requires a Sustainer as well as an Originator, for God must be continually present in every part of it, and that the Sustainer is the immediate Breather of human life and Ruler of human spirits, with whom there may be communion, and the consciousness that His hand and His arm are underneath and around. And as regards revealed religion, it is not to be overlooked that for the Scottish evolutionist there is 'behind the screen of nature with its undeviating operations a system of Mercy and Grace towards which human beings stand in a peculiar relation.'

¹ *Ibid.* Chap. ii. 'The Development Hypothesis and its Consequences,' p. 15.

The novelty of thought and peculiarity of language in the writings of Darwin, Wallace, Chambers, and other naturalists in the first half of the last century may account in some measure for the suspicion and hostility with which Evolution was regarded and treated by such men as Sedgwick and Milner. But as thinkers and writers became more familiar with the methods and phraseology of evolutionists, as they realised the limitations of the theory in the hands of its most strenuous advocates, the attitude of antagonism gave place to one of intelligent appreciation if not of actual acceptance. Theologians also came to see that there is nothing in evolution as a working hypothesis of method and order, of growth, development and progress which contradicts the contents of the first chapter of Genesis or the fourth chapter of the Westminster Confession.

This was made plain in 1867 when the late Duke of Argyll gave to the world the most popular, and in some respects the most valuable of his works, *The Reign of Law*.¹ Although not a pure scientist this versatile Scottish nobleman was an ardent student of organic and inorganic nature, and exercised considerable influence upon the thought of his day. The fifth chapter of *The Reign of Law* is devoted to *Creation by Law*, which is the ruling idea in the *Vestiges*. In the course of his treatment of that thesis the author frankly avows his belief in the mutability of species.

¹ *The Reign of Law*. By the Duke of Argyll, K.G. Author of *Unity of Nature*. 1866. Nineteenth Edition, 1890.

‘If I am asked,’ he says, ‘whether I believe that every separate species has been a separate creation—not born, but separately made—I must answer, that I do not believe it.’¹ After a thoughtful and suggestive treatment of such matters as Natural Selection, Correlation of Growth, Adherence to Type, Power of Adaptation, he points out that all these are subordinate to the Law of Purpose and Intention, under which the various parts of Organic Form are combined for use. In common with Dr A. R. Wallace he regards all theories about the means and the method of creation as simply questions of how the Creator has worked. With him Creation by Law, Evolution by Law, or the Reign of Law are so many expressions for ‘the reign of Creative Force directed by Creative knowledge, worked under the control of Creative Power, and in fulfilment of Creative Purpose.’² In carrying out his reasoning and research the Duke of Argyll became a theistic Evolutionist. For him it was just as reverent a conception of God to believe that He created primordial forms capable of self-development into all subsequent forms as to suppose that the Creator required to put forth fresh creative acts in order to supply the lacunæ which He Himself had made. For the author of *The Unity of Nature* and *The Reign of Law*, as for other theists and naturalists, Evolution was just ‘God’s way of doing things.’

In the session 1870-71 a first-year student of New College, Edinburgh, chose for the subject of his

¹ *The Reign of Law*, p. 236.

² *Ibid.* p. 273.

Homily, because it suited both his liking and capacity, The Six Days of Creation ; and in his second session he wrote a class essay on 'The Doctrine of Creation.' The student was Henry Drummond, who subsequently become Professor of Natural Science in the Free Church College, Glasgow. Both as a student of Nature and a Professor of Science, Drummond believed in and made large use of the theory of Evolution. The inaugural lecture delivered on the occasion of his being inducted to his chair was devoted to a statement of *The Contribution of Science to Christianity*.¹ According to the lecturer, in 1883 theology was adjusting itself to a new relation. To enable it to do this Science offers it certain instruments which, if rightly used, will bring about what Herbert Spencer called the purification of religion. The instruments are the Scientific Method and the Doctrine of Evolution. The scientific method insists upon the value of facts and of laws. The work of modern science in the direction of law has been the demonstration of uniformity, which is now the postulate of nature, and will one day become that also of the spiritual world. The doctrine of evolution of which science makes offer to theology is a doctrine of the method of creation. It is not yet proved, in some of its forms it is never likely to be proved, but it is one which, in a general form, has received the widest assent from theology. 'It will be time for

¹ First published in *The Expositor*, 1885, reprinted in *The New Evangelism and other Papers*, 1899.

theology to be unanimous about it when science is unanimous about it.' For this 'splendid hypothesis' theologians cannot be too grateful to science. 'That theology can only enrich itself which gives it even temporary place.' 'The doctrine of evolution fills a gap at the very beginning of our religion, and no one who looks now at the transcendent spectacle of the world's past, as disclosed by science, will deny that it has filled it worthily.' In his two permanent contributions to Natural Science Professor Drummond applied in succession these scientific instruments. In the first he employed the scientific method in order to determine the operation of Law in the world of spirit; in the second he applied the doctrine of Evolution in order to trace the successive stages in the development of human nature. *Natural Law in the Spiritual World*¹ is the most popular and brilliant product of the Glasgow professor's genius. It suffers somewhat from the fact that it is not a homogeneous and continuous work, but a collection of papers or addresses written at widely separate dates and from different points of view. It is weighted with an Introduction, which the author advised 'the general reader' to ignore, and which commits its writer to a position discredited both by scientists and theologians—the position that the Spiritual Laws are not analogous to the Natural Laws, but that *they are the same Laws*. 'It is not a question of analogy, but of

¹ *Natural Law in the Spiritual World*. First edition 1884, latest 1902.

*Identity.*¹ From drafts and jottings found among his papers it is evident the gifted lecturer contemplated a recasting of the work in which several positions were to be either wholly abandoned or considerably modified.² These things allowed for, it remains that the reading of *Natural Law in the Spiritual World* has marked an epoch in the mental experience of thousands all over the world. It has given to its innumerable readers a new conception of the two worlds which Keble assures us are ours,³ a new vision of the unity which underlies the Divine working in the fields of Nature and the realm of Grace.

In his second scientific work Professor Drummond made his last and greatest contribution to Religion and Science. The chapters which make up *The Ascent of Man* were delivered as lectures in Boston, and the volume was published in 1894.⁴ In this book the

¹ *Natural Law in the Spiritual World*. Introduction. 'The Natural Laws are not the shadows or images of the Spiritual in the same sense as autumn is emblematical of Decay, or the falling leaf of Death. The Natural Laws, as the Law of Continuity might well warn us, do not stop with the visible and then give place to a new set of Laws bearing a strong similitude to them. The laws of the invisible are the same Laws, projections of the natural not supernatural. Analogous Phenomena are not the fruit of parallel Laws, but of the same Laws—Laws which at one end, as it were, may be dealing with Matter, at the other end with Spirit.' Do.

² *Henry Drummond*. By J. G. Simpson, 1901. Pt. II. Ch. ii. 'Science and Religion.'

³ 'Two worlds are ours : 'tis only sin
Forbids us to descry
The mystic heaven, and earth within,
Plain as the sea and sky.' *Christian Year*.

Septuagesima Sunday.

⁴ *The Lowell Lectures on the Ascent of Man*, 1894. A month before publication the lecturer wrote :—' My book all but through the press.

naturalist applies the second instrument which he spoke of in his inaugural lecture as proffered by Science to Theology—the doctrine of Evolution. By such Evolutionists as Darwin and Huxley and Spencer the prominent factor in evolutionary progress is represented to be the Struggle for Life, Natural Selection or Natural Rejection. Drummond's contention is that Selection is not the sole process, that it is not even the main one in biology. For another factor, which has all but escaped the notice of biologists, has played a prominent part in the drama of life, and that is, The Struggle for the life of others.¹ This factor is the physiological name for the greatest word of ethics—Other-ism, Altruism, Love. The struggle for life is Self-ism; and the transition from that to Other-ism is the supreme transition of human history. Drummond does not claim to be the first to detect the existence of Altruism. He is eager to make good its recognition by Darwin and Spencer, by Romanes, Geddes and Thomson. But it may fairly be claimed for him that he gave a more systematic explanation and application of it than had been given by any earlier or contemporary evolutionist. Under such headings as 'The Struggle for the Life of Others,' 'The Evolution of a Mother,' 'The Evolution of a Father,' the lecturer traces, with rare skill and felicity, the building of the

Title,—The Evolution of Man. "Ascent" is denied me, as Mathilde Blind won't give it up.' Eventually the prohibition was removed, and the Evolution became the Ascent of Man.

The Lowell Lectures on the Ascent of Man, 1894. Introduction. 'The missing Factors in current theories.'

temple of Nature to its last and most elaborately wrought pinnacle. In the closing chapter which has Involution for its title the author of the *Ascent* claims a place for Christianity in the Divine order of the universe. With him Evolution is Revelation and Revelation is Evolution. Christianity is 'the phenomenal expression of the Divine, the progressive realization of the Ideal, the Ascent of Love.'¹ If asked to reconcile Christianity and Evolution this Christian Scientist declared it to be unnecessary. Why is it unnecessary? Because the two are at one. For what is Evolution? A method of creation. What is its object? To make more perfect living beings. What is Christianity? A method of creation. What is its object? To make more perfect living beings. Through what does Evolution work? Through love. Through what does Christianity work? Through love. Evolution and Christianity have the same author, the same end, the same spirit. No man can run up the natural lines of Evolution without coming to Christianity at the top. Christianity—not any particular form of Christianity—is the Further Evolution. The Further Evolution must go on, the Higher Kingdom must come. First the blade—where we are to-day; then the ear—where we shall be to-morrow; then the full corn in the year—which awaits our children's children, and which we live to hasten.²

Drummond, it has been already said, took for the

¹ *The Lowell Lectures on the Ascent of Man*, 1894, p. 435.

² *Ibid.* pp. 438-44.

theme of his inaugural address, as lecturer on Natural Science, the contribution of Science to Christianity, and spoke of a loan of instruments as forming the initial contribution. So far as he was concerned the loan was repaid with compound interest. Leaving it to scientists to discover slight errors of statement and critics to lay the finger upon flaws in the reasoning, unprofessional and unprejudiced readers will regard the teaching of *Natural Law* and the *Ascent of Man* as forming a splendid contribution of Christianity to Science, and as doing not a little to differentiate the conception of Creation of the twentieth-century naturalist from that of the seventeenth-century divines of Westminster.

III. CRITICISM.

In his *History of Protestant Theology*¹ Professor Dorner traces with fine insight and masterly handling the treatment of the Evangelical Principle by the Churches of the Reformation. Luther, he shows, clearly discerned and developed both sides of the Principle, first the material or subjective, and then the formal or objective side. The Principle is developed on its material side in his doctrine of justification only by faith in Christ; on its formal side by his assertion of the sole authority of the Scriptures. The order of evolution in the case of the German Reformer was determined by his inward development

¹ *History of Protestant Theology*, particularly in Germany. Viewed according to its Fundamental Movement and in connection with the Religious, Moral, and Intellectual Life. By Dr J. A. Dorner. Translated by Dr George Robson and Sophia Taylor. 1871.

and his experience in the faith. Luther became possessed of the personal experience of salvation before he was called upon to formulate his position regarding the canon and its contents. This affected the structure of all the Lutheran symbols. As a rule they put the material or subjective side of the protestant principle before the formal or objective. They start from anthropology, from the need of sinful men and the experience of salvation, and then proceed to theology proper, including the supremacy, the authority, and the inspiration of the Word of God, which are subordinately, sometimes incidentally stated.

The Reformed Churches followed a different method in the construction of their symbols. They started with theology, and from that they proceeded to anthropology; they gave a prominent and, in many cases, a primary place to the formal or objective side of Evangelicism. Thus, the First Helvetic Confession of 1536, the earliest Reformed Creed of national authority, has for the title of its opening article, *De Scriptura Sacra*;¹ and the second of the same name—the last and best of the Zwinglian group—treats in its first chapter, *De Scriptura Sancta, Vero Dei Verbo*.²

Coming to the Westminster symbol of 1647, we find that in it, as in the Continental Reformed Confessions generally, a primary position is assigned to the written Word. Chapter first is 'Of the Holy Scripture.'

The treatment of the subject is natural and logical. The opening article is occupied with a brief but

¹ Schaff's *Creeds*, vol. iii. p. 211.

² *Ibid.* p. 237.

succinct statement of the three related yet distinct departments of the Knowledge of God—the Light of Nature, of Revelation, and of Scripture. The second and third articles describe positively and negatively the Canon of Scripture and declare, but do not define, the Inspiration of all canonical books. In the four articles that follow, the great outstanding qualities of Scripture are dwelt upon—Authority, Perfection, and Perspicuity. The three remaining articles set forth the practical Uses of Scripture, in the course of which it is declared that the Scriptures ‘are to be translated into the vulgar language of every nation unto which they come;’ that ‘the infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself’; and that ‘the supreme judge by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture.’¹

The description of the Canon of Scripture is noteworthy as being at once full and simple. It is full. It enumerates individually all the books both of the Old and the New Testament canon, which is not done, so far as is known to the writer, in any earlier creed of either the Lutheran or the Reformed Churches. It is simple, severely simple, stript bare of everything that is only traditional and of ancient usage. Nothing is said about the authorship of individual books beyond what there is Scripture warrant for affirming.

¹ Chap. I. viii. ix. x.

The Westminster divines did not commit themselves and others, as Ussher committed the Irish episcopate, to the Mosaic authorship of the first five books of the Bible; the Psalms are not ascribed, as in the Scottish Metrical Version, to David; Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Canticles are not declared to be the composition of Solomon; the Epistle to the Hebrews is not assigned to Paul, nor the Apocalypse to John. The explanation of this omission of designations of reputed authorship is to be found in the conviction that it was of little or no importance who wrote a particular portion of the Canon, seeing the Canon in its entirety is the inspired Word of God. The framers of the Chapter were of John Owen's mind when he affirmed that the Divine authority of any part of Scripture being vindicated, it is of no great moment to inquire scrupulously after its penman. Writings that proceed from Divine Inspiration receive no addition of authority from the reputation or esteem of those by whom they were written. And this the Holy Ghost hath sufficiently manifested by shutting up the names of many of them from the knowledge of the Church of all ages.'¹

The mention of 'Divine Inspiration' in the foregoing statement of Owen leads naturally to the putting of the question, What is the teaching of the Westminster symbol on that subject? Here we encounter a remarkable reticence. While other topics

¹ *Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 1668-1684. Vols. xvii.-xxiv., in Goold's edition of complete works. Ex. ii. § 1.

are treated with some measure of fulness this one receives no treatment at all. The fact is stated in the fewest possible words. Of the canonical books, individually specified, it is affirmed, 'All which are given, by inspiration of God, to be the rule of faith and life.' Concerning 'the books commonly called Apocrypha' it is declared that they 'are no part of the Canon of the Scripture, not being of divine inspiration.' And of the Old Testament in Hebrew and the New Testament in Greek it is stated that, "being immediately inspired by God, and by His singular care and providence kept pure in all ages," they 'are therefore authentical.' That is all, absolutely all. There is no definition of the nature of inspiration as a work of the Holy Spirit, as it operates upon human agents, and affects the product of the agents. There is no distinction drawn between Divine inspiration and natural elevation, between the effluence of the Spirit and the afflatus of genius. There is no registering of degrees of inspiration, one of which may leave room for inaccuracy of statement, while another secures inerrancy.

Controversial pamphlets and tractates have been written upon *The Westminster Doctrine of the Inspiration of Scripture*.¹ In the sense in which the coiners of that expression employ it there is no such thing. Whatever may have been the private, indi-

¹ *The Westminster Doctrine of the Inspiration of Scripture*. By Hugh Martin, D.D. 1877.

Westminster Doctrine anent Holy Scripture. Tractates by Profs. A. A. Hodge and B. B. Warfield. With Notes on Recent Discussions. By Rev. [Dr] Howie. 1891.

vidual opinions of the compilers of the symbol, they certainly and, we believe, purposely abstained from committing themselves and others to any theory upon the subject.

Unhappily this example of reticence, of abstaining from dogmatising regarding the nature and method of Inspiration, was not followed by the scholastic theologians who succeeded the Westminster divines. Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin, with their immediate followers, had asserted the objective authority of Scripture in opposition to the claims of popes and councils, but while doing so they were careful to develop the spiritual side of the matter and to give prominence to the correlative doctrine of the Witness of the Holy Spirit. Later theologians, on the other hand, were greatly exercised about the accuracy of the Record and in their endeavour to vindicate this quality they were led to formulate theories of Inspiration which were unfamiliar to theologians in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. One of these theories propounded a distinction in degrees of Inspiration. The distinction, advocated by Dr Dodridge in England, was accepted by two eighteenth-century divines in Scotland—one a St Andrews Principal of the Church of Scotland, and the other a Professor of the United Secession Synod. Principal Hill, when combating the views of Dr Priestley who virtually denied Divine Inspiration, accustomed his students to regard the acting of the Father of Spirits upon the minds of Scripture writers as carried on in

three ascending degrees. The lowest stage he called Superintendence; the higher degree, termed Elevation, involved the enlargement of the understanding and the heightening of the conceptions of the writer; while the highest degree was that of Suggestion, in virtue of which both the thoughts and the words were supplied by the Spirit and the authors of Scripture became merely the vehicles for conveying the Divine mind and will.¹ These degrees were substantially adopted by Dr John Dick in his *Essay on Inspiration*. The Secession professor abstained from applying the term inspiration in the same sense to the whole of Scripture, because the same degree of Divine assistance was not necessary in the composition of every book or part. In some portions he considered 'there is more of God than in others.' Although not satisfied with the terms Superintendence and Elevation he adopted them for lack of better, while for the word Suggestion used by Doddridge and Hill, he substituted that of Revelation.² The degree theory has not met with acceptance, and it is not now in use among theological writers.

Another theory subsequent in development to the time of the Westminster Assembly is that of Verbal Inspiration or inspired Dictation.³ This hypothesis

¹ *Lectures in Divinity*, vol. i. book ii. chap. i. 'Inspiration of Scripture.'

² *An Essay on the Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures*. By John Dick, D.D., 1800. Also posthumous *Lectures on Theology*, Lec. xi.

³ The Princeton divines would fain make out that the Westminster Confession teaches verbal Inspiration and Inerrancy. Dr A. A. Hodge in his *Commentary on the Confession of Faith* affirms that certain sections of the first chapter pronounce the canonical books to be 'one and all,

was certainly in the ascendant in Scotland during the eighteenth century—and the first half of the following one. This may be gathered from the popularity and wide circulation of such works as those of Robert Haldane and Professor Gaussen, in which the view was openly avowed and strenuously advocated.¹

in thought *and verbal expression*, in substance and form, wholly the Word of God.' The effects of the 'supernatural influence of the Spirit of God acting upon the spirits of the sacred writers, called "inspiration" . . . are that all written under it is the very Word of God, of infallible truth, and of divine authority: and this infallibility and authority attach as well to *the verbal expression* in which the revelation is conveyed as to the matter of the revelation itself' (p. 34, Goold's Ed.). Prof. Warfield has committed himself to the position that the theologians of the Westminster age held both the verbal inspiration and the inerrancy of the original autographs of the Scriptures. He affirms there are numerous phrases in the Confession which support this position. The only one he specifies is the expression in the eighth section—'being immediately inspired by God.' (*Tractate, ut sup.* p. 11.) It requires something more than an 'open mind' to see how 'immediately' can be construed into 'verbally,' even with the help of Ball's Catechism to which the learned professor refers his readers for the historical significance of the adverb.

Professor W. Robertson Smith was a truer guide to the meaning of the word as used in the Westminster symbol when, in his *Answer to the Form of Libel* (1878), he wrote: 'The Confession does not use the expression to define *the kind* of inspiration which belongs to the books of Scripture; but only speaks of the immediate inspiration of the original text as distinguished from the versions. The word *immediately* cannot, therefore, be used to fix on the Confession any theory of the nature or degree of inspiration. On any conceivable theory it is clear that inspiration belongs primarily to the original text, and only mediately, or in a secondary sense to the versions. This distinction is employed in order to prove against the Church of Rome that the original Hebrew and Greek alone, and not any version is authentic, *i.e.*, is the authoritative document to which parties in any controversy of religion must make their appeal,' p. 19.

¹ *The Books of the O. and N. Testament proved to be Canonical and their Verbal Inspiration maintained and established.* By Robert Haldane, Esq. Fifth Edition, 1845.

Theopneustia. By Prof. Gaussen, Geneva. Translated into English. Gaussen was one of Haldane's sons in the faith.

About the middle of last century, however, a change become apparent in the views of Scottish theologians of light and leading. The turning of the tide can be seen in the work of an Edinburgh professor whose orthodoxy and adherence to Westminster theology no one would think of calling in question. In 1865 Dr James Bannerman published an elaborate work upon Inspiration.¹ Into the inspiration of Scripture Professor Bannerman considered that two, and only two, elements could be recognised as entering—the objective truth to be declared orally or in writing, and the supernatural transference of that truth to the spoken or recorded word. Anything more than that he regarded as involving what is not essential to inspiration ; anything beyond the simple announcement that men, under inspiration spoke and wrote with infallible truth and divine authority Dr Bannerman treated as a theory containing more than Scripture has revealed. Verbal inspiration is, in his judgment, a theory and nothing more. It is not inconceivable, it cannot be proved to be inconsistent with the facts and teaching of Scripture. On the other hand it cannot be proved to be true. And so the Edinburgh professor concludes, ‘If it does not run counter to anything found in Scripture, it is, we suspect, an explanation of the mystery which Scripture does not demand.’²

The theory of verbal inspiration or inspired dictation

¹ *Inspiration : The Infallible Truth and Divine Authority of the Holy Scriptures.* By James Bannerman, D.D. 1865.

² *Ibid.* pp. 244-48.

practically forecloses questions as to the origin, history, form and character of the Biblical writings. It precludes or excludes inquiry, by ordinary critical and historical methods, into matters textual and exegetical, seeing that, as John Owen did not hesitate to affirm, 'every tittle and iota in the Word of God is to be regarded as from God.'¹ There were not wanting, however, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries scholars, critics, and theologians who entered their protest against the mechanical theory, who claimed and exercised the right to examine the text and the contents of the canonical books, and so paved the way for the scientific Biblical criticism of a later day.

In Scotland the earliest of these critical scholars and divines was Alexander Geddes whom a living Oxford authority on Scripture interpretation has styled 'a pioneer, and to some extent the founder of criticism.'² Dr Geddes was in many ways a notable man. Born (1737) of Roman Catholic parents in Banffshire, and going to the Scottish College of Paris for the completion of his theological course, young Geddes entered upon ministerial work in a congregation of the old faith in his native county. After a ten years' pastorate he was deposed because he disregarded the

¹ *The Divine Original, Authority, Self-Evidencing Light and Power of the Scriptures. Of the Integrity and Purity of the Hebrew and Greek Text of the Scripture*, with considerations on the Prolegomena and Appendix to the late *Biblica Polyglotta*. Works (Goold's Edition), vol. xvi.

² *Founders of Old Testament Criticism*. By T. K. Cheyne, D.D., 1893, p. 6.

expostulations of his diocesan who remonstrated with him for cultivating the friendship and actually attending the ministrations of the protestant minister of Cullen. The remainder of his years was spent for the most part in London, where he gave himself to what he considered his life-work, a new version of the Bible.¹ Of this *magnum opus* only a small portion was completed and published. At the time of his death (1802) Dr Geddes was engaged upon a translation of the Psalms with Critical Remarks; but the translation broke off at Psalm 118, and of the Remarks not a line was ever written.² The originality and independence of the Roman Catholic scholar, displayed in prospectus, proposals and specimens, were displeasing to his ecclesiastical superiors. When the first volume of the Version appeared prohibition, in the form of a Pastoral Letter signed by three apostolic vicars, was issued, and this was followed by a sentence of suspension from the exercise of clerical function pronounced by the Bishop of London. Considering the virulent opposition he excited and the determined stand he made in the interests of liberal thought and learning, the wonder is that on his death-bed the rites of the Church were administered to this great scholar and critic. The saying public mass

¹ *A new Version of the Holy Bible, or The Books accounted sacred by Jews and Christians: otherwise called the Books of the Old and New Covenants, faithfully translated from corrected Texts of the Originals, with various Readings, explanatory Notes and Critical Remarks.*

² The translation of the Psalms was published posthumously in 1807.

for his soul when departed, however, was prohibited by an express interdict of the ecclesiastic who had suspended him when living.¹

As regards the composition of the Pentateuch the Scottish Catholic critic advocated the fragmentary hypothesis in opposition to the documentary view propounded by Eichhorn, the father of the Higher Criticism and the first to employ that term.² 'From intrinsic evidence,' wrote Geddes in the preface to the first volume of his *New Version*, 'three things to me seem indubitable. 1st. The Pentateuch, in its present form, was not written by Moses. 2nd. It was written in the land of Canaan, and most probably at Jerusalem. 3rd. It could not be written before the reign of David, nor after that of Hezekiah. The long, pacific reign of Solomon (the Augustan age of Judæa) is the period to which I would refer it. Yet I confess there are some marks of a posterior date, or at least of posterior interpolation. . . . It [the Pentateuch] was compiled from ancient documents, some of which were coeval with Moses, and some even anterior to Moses. . . . From his journals a great part of the Pentateuch seems to have been compiled. Whether

¹ *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Alexander Geddes, LL.D.* By J. M. Good, 1803. Chap. xi.

² In the preface to the second edition of his *Einleitung in das Alte Testament*, published in 1787, Johann Gottefreid Eichhorn wrote :—'I am obliged to give the most pains to a hitherto entirely unworked field, the investigation of the internal condition of the particular writings of the Old Testament by the help of the *Higher Criticism* (a new name to no Humanist).' *Biblical Study*. By Prof. C. A. Briggs, D.D. Third Edition, 1891, chap. vii. p. 204.

he were also the original author of the Hebrew cosmogony and of the history prior to his own days I would neither confidently assert, nor positively deny.' As regards the Genesis account of the creation Dr Geddes boldly avowed himself a believer in the mythical theory. 'I believe it to be,' he did not hesitate to say, 'a most beautiful mythos, or philosophical fiction, contrived with great wisdom, dressed up in the garb of real history, adapted to the shallow intellects of a rude barbarous nation and perfectly well calculated for the great and good purposes for which it was contrived.'¹

That there are errors not only in the translations, but also in the originals of Scripture, due to the corruptions of time and the negligence of copyists Dr Geddes no more doubted than he doubted the existence of such in the writings of Homer and Virgil, of Milton and of Shakspeare. It availed nothing to remind him that the latter compositions are human while the former are Divine or inspired. Granting, he would reply, that every sentence, word, syllable, of the Bible were originally Divine, that is to say, directly and immediately inspired by the Spirit of God, does it follow that they who first transcribed these divinely inspired volumes from the autographs, and they who copied and re-copied these through every age were likewise divinely inspired? 'I scarcely think that the greatest stickler for the integrity of the Hebrew text will at this day maintain so strange a

¹ *Critical Remarks*, i. p. 26.

paradox. That Christians should ever have thought so is, to me, beyond all things astonishing.’¹

The nineteenth century was well advanced before there appeared in Scotland a Biblical scholar capable of working on the lines of Alexander Geddes. But in 1875 there was published the first of a series of writings which signalised the rise of the Higher Criticism movement within our borders. The writer was William Robertson Smith, who had been, in 1870, elected Professor of Oriental Languages and Exegesis of the Old Testament in the Free Church College at Aberdeen. Subsequent to his removal from the chair in 1881, by an administrative or executive decision of the General Assembly, Robertson Smith made valuable contributions to Semitic literature;² but his enrichment of Biblical Criticism is to be found in a series of articles contributed to the ninth edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, in the publications connected with the ecclesiastical controversy to which the earlier of these articles gave rise, in contributions to the *British and Foreign Evangelical Review* and *The Expositor*, and in two series of popular lectures upon *The Old Testament in the Jewish Church*, and *The Prophets of Israel*.³

¹ *Idea of a New Version of the Holy Bible for the use of the English Catholics.* 1780.

² *Kinship and Marriage in Early Arabia.* 1885. *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites.* 1889.

³ (1) The outstanding Articles are those on Angels, Bible, Canticles, David, Haggai, Hebrew Language and Literature, Messiah, Psalms, Zephaniah.

(2) *Answer to the Form of Libel now before the Free Church Presbytery of*

With the protracted and painful proceedings of Church courts to which the articles gave rise we have no call to deal, and on the decisions arrived at by these courts we have no right to express a judgment. Our concern is with the attitude of this brilliant scholar and acute critic toward the supreme and subordinate Standards of his Church, and the positions which his Biblical studies led him to adopt regarding the date, internal structure, and literary form of the books of the Old Testament.

As a Biblical critic Robertson Smith started from the position that the religion of the Bible is the religion of Revelation, that Revealed Religion grew and developed, not by the word of man, but by the Word of the Lord. In particular, he set out with the assumption that the Old Testament history exhibits a personal and supernatural manifestation of God the Redeemer to His chosen people, and that the writers of the Canon were organs of Revelation who spake and wrote, not by their own wisdom, but by supernatural, divine teaching. Further, he was a firm believer in the Inspiration, the infallible truth, and the Divine authority of Scripture. The Infallibility and Authority of Scripture are, he maintained,

Aberdeen, 1878. *Additional Answer to the Libel*, with some account of the evidence that parts of the Pentateuchal Law are later than the time of Moses. 1878. *Answer to the Amended Libel*. 1879. *Speech delivered at a special Meeting of the Commission of Assembly*. 1880.

(3) *The Old Testament in the Jewish Church: Twelve Lectures on Biblical Criticism*. 1881. Second edition, 1892.

The Prophets of Israel and their Place in History to the close of the eighth Century, B.C. 1882. Second edition, 1895.

distinct not only in degree but in kind from the general veracity and trustworthiness of the Bible record; and, as no truth coming to us from without can be apprehended except by a power within putting the recipient into communion with it, so only the Spirit of God in the heart of the believer enables him to realise that it is God who speaks in the Word, revealing Himself and declaring His Will.

Coming to the details of criticism, Robertson Smith regarded the Pentateuch as a great body or collection of mingled history and law. In the case of the historical narrative contained in these five books he did not consider that Moses was the author of the whole up to the last chapter of Deuteronomy. The history, he pointed out, does not profess to be written by Moses, it only notes that, from time to time, he wrote down certain things. As we have it now the Pentateuchal history was not written in the wilderness, but in Canaan, and it is not a single continuous work, but a combination of several narratives originally independent.

Into the historical narrative of the Pentateuch there have been inserted several distinct legal collections, in addition to the Ten Commandments which Moses left in writing on the stone tablets. Of these legal or ritual ordinances there are three principal groups. To the analysis of the third of these collections—the Deuteronomic Code—Robertson Smith devoted a considerable amount of attention, and his views upon the book of Deuteronomy figured largely

in the documents and discussions connected with his ecclesiastical trial. Distinguishing the historical setting or framework from the legislative kernel or programme of the composition, the writer of the article 'Bible' contended that the latter portion was written centuries after the death of Moses, and that it contained new matter, a development of the old legislation given under prophetic authority, to meet the new needs of a later age.¹ By the unknown writer of the Deuteronomic Code the laws set forth in it are thrown into the form of a speech put into the mouth of Moses as if delivered by him in the land of Moab, to show, as by a parable, that they are spoken by the same prophetic spirit as wrought in and through Moses, and that they are authoritative developments of his legislation. The unnamed author had no intention of leading his readers to think that the speech thus laid before them had been delivered and written down by the legislator himself. Every one of his day would understand that it was not meant to be accepted as a piece of actual history, but that it was to be received for its own intrinsic worth, and on the authority of the prophetic circle from which it emanated.² Some critics, notably the Dutch theologian Kuenen, regarded the book of Deuteronomy as a literary fraud which the priests of his reign attempted to palm off upon Josiah as a veritable writing of Moses. Robertson Smith expressly disclaimed such a view. Deception, fraud, are incom-

¹ *Answer to the Form of Libel, ut sup.* p. 53.

² *Ibid.* p. 54.

patible with the inspiration, and the Scotch Professor strenuously upheld the Canonicity and the inspiration of Deuteronomy.¹

In his handling of other Old Testament books the Scottish Hebraist displayed the same disregard of traditionalism and the same fearless independence in reaching and stating conclusions. Thus, in his opinion the author of Chronicles, while not inventing history, allowed himself that freedom of literary form always taken by ancient historians and early copyists, and advanced statements not intended to be taken literally.² The book of Ruth is 'a graceful idyll, having a natural affinity with the post-exile Psalms';³ that of Job shows a poetical invention of incident attached for didactic purposes to a name apparently derived from old traditions;⁴ the book of Jonah may be parabolic, although Jonah himself was a real historical person;⁵ the Canticles have suffered from interpolations; and in the Psalms great freedom was taken on

¹ 'Critics of the school of Kuenen, with whom I have no theological sympathies, though I respect his eminent scholarship and acuteness, do regard the book as a fraud palmed off upon Josiah by the priests. But apart from the psychological violence of the hypothesis, that the author of a book like Deuteronomy could be party to a vulgar fraud, it appears to me that this view stands condemned on the critical evidence itself. . . . Kuenen's theory is radically different from that which I share with such critics as Ewald and Riehm. . . . The judgment passed on my views must not, therefore, be prejudiced by referring, as has so often been done, to a view which I disclaim.' *Answer to the Form of Libel, ut sup.* p. 54.

² *Encyc. Brit.* Article 'Chronicles.' *Answer to the Form of Libel*, pp. 57-58.

³ *Encyc. Brit.* vol. xi. *Speech, ut sup.* p. 19.

⁴ *Encyc. Brit.* Article 'Bible.'

⁵ *Speech, ut sup.* pp. 19-21.

the part of readers and copyists, while in a large number of instances a later hand has systematically substituted the Divine name Elohim for Jehovah.¹

The daring development and the strenuous advocacy of this new movement in Biblical Criticism on the part of the Aberdeen professor created a profound sensation in Scotland. There were theologians and critics of competent scholarship and approved orthodoxy who came forward in support of the traditional view of the date, authorship and structure of Old Testament Scripture.² And there were ecclesiastics, possessing greater or less qualification, who debated, in Church courts and through the press, the charges brought against the libelled professor of publishing and promulgating opinions contradictory or opposed to the doctrine of the immediate inspiration, infallible truth and divine authority of the Holy Scriptures as set forth in the Confession of Faith, or otherwise of publishing and promulgating opinions which are in themselves of a dangerous and unsettling tendency in their bearing on these doctrines.³

¹ *Encyc. Brit.* Article 'Bible.'

² Dr David Brown, Principal of the Aberdeen Free Church College, took a leading and adverse part in the trial of Prof. Robertson Smith both in the Aberdeen Presbytery and in the General Assembly.

Dr G. C. M. Douglas, Principal of the Glasgow Free Church College, published a pamphlet entitled, *Why I still believe that Moses wrote Deuteronomy: Some reflections after reading Professor Robertson Smith's Additional Answer to the Libel*, 1878. Dr William Binnie, Professor of Church History and Pastoral Theology in the Aberdeen F. C. College, opposed the views of his co-professor in a pamphlet which dealt with, *The proposed Reconstruction of the Old Testament History*. 1880.

³ *Report of proceedings in the Free Church Presbytery of Aberdeen*. February 14 to March 14, 1878.

The accused scholar and critic emphatically repudiated both of these charges. He denied that his views were verbally contradictory to, or logically inconsistent with what is contained in the Standards of his Church. In making good this contention he was led to develop his doctrine of Holy Scripture. It is the doctrine of the Reformation and Westminster divines as distinguished from the views of Romanists and Schoolmen. As unfolded in the symbols of the Reformed Churches the doctrine which Robertson Smith endorsed may be thus summarised.

1. The Revelation of God is distinct from the Scriptures which record it. There is the Divine communication of mind, heart, will, and there is the Record which conveys the communication. The Westminster symbol makes prominent and emphatic this distinction when it states in the opening sentence that 'it pleased the Lord, at sundry times, and in divers manners, to reveal Himself, and to declare that His will unto His Church; and *afterwards*, for the better preserving and propagating of the truth, and for the more sure establishment and comfort of the Church against the corruption of the flesh, and the malice of Satan and of the world, to commit the same wholly unto writing.'

2. While it is correct to say that Scripture *is* the Word of God, the copula 'is' does not necessarily denote logical identity. Some Reformation divines did not regard it as doing so, and several Reformed Confessions employed phrases which conveyed a

different meaning.¹ The Westminster Confession seems to regard Holy Scripture as co-extensive and identical with the Word or Revelation of God; and the Larger Catechism answers the question, What is the word of God? by saying, 'The holy scriptures of the Old and New Testament *are* the word of God.' On the other hand the Shorter Catechism affirms, with Calvin, 'The word of God, which is *contained* in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.' Professor Smith had a preference for such expressions as Scripture *records*, or Scripture *conveys* the Revelation or Word of God.²

3. The Witness of the Spirit testifies directly to the infallibility and authority of Revelation, and the Witness is apprehended by faith. This Witness of the Spirit does not take to do with the written

¹ The *Confessio Fidei Gallicana* of 1559 was prepared by Calvin and his pupil De Chandieu, revised and approved by a Synod at Paris, 1559, delivered by Beza to Charles IX. at Poissy, adopted by the Synod of La Rochelle, 1571 (so sometimes called the 'Confession of Rochelle'), and solemnly sanctioned by Henry IV. In this French Confession it is said, 'Nous croyons que la Parole *qui est contenue en ces livres*, est procédée de Dieu.' Schaff's *Creeeds*, vol. iii. p. 362.

² 'The conclusion that Scripture *is* of infallible truth and Divine authority will be more correctly expressed by saying that Scripture records or conveys to us the infallible and authoritative Word of God.

I use the expression 'Scripture records or conveys to us the Word of God,' because some modern writers have twisted the old Calvinistic expression in a new sense. People now say that Scripture *contains* God's word, when they mean that part of the Bible is the Word of God, and another part is the word of man. That is not the doctrine of our Churches, which hold that the substance of *all* Scripture is God's Word. What is not part of the record of God's Word is no part of Scripture. Only, we must distinguish between the record and the Divine communication of God's heart and will which the record conveys.' *Answer to the Form of Libel*, p. 24 and n.

characters and literary structure of the Record, and the infallibility which belongs to the substance of the Record does not extend to the outward form of it. It is, therefore, illegitimate and irrelevant to refer to the inspiration, infallibility and authority of Scripture as settling any question as to the material form of the Bible, or as to possible human imperfections in the Scriptures on all matters that are not of faith.¹

4. The 'singular care and providence' of God, as the Westminster symbol puts it, has 'kept pure in all ages the Old Testament in Hebrew and the New Testament in Greek'—so pure, said Robertson Smith, as to form for all men a reliable Record of the Divine Revelation. The purity of the Scriptures as an infallible declaration of the saving will and grace of God is, in his judgment, not affected by the fact that the text of Scripture, as we have it now, contains some discrepancies, verbal inaccuracies, and historical errors. We have a trustworthy Revelation and a trustworthy Record thereof, a Record which tells us all that we need to know of God and His Will, with infallible certainty.² The Record of Divine Revela-

¹ *Answer to the Form of Libel*, pp. 25-27.

² 'God's Word is the declaration of what is in God's heart with regard to us. And so its certainty lies in its substance, not in the way in which it comes to us (Calvin's *Inst.* Lib. iii. cap. 2. sec. 6) so long as we go to Scripture, only to find in it God and His redeeming love, mirrored before the eye of faith, we may rest assured that we shall find living, self-evidencing, infallible truth in every part of it, and that we shall find nothing else. But to the Reformers this was the whole use of Scripture (First Helvetic Confession, Art. V. 'Scopus Scripturæ.' Schaff's *Creeds*, iii. p. 212). Now, since Scripture has no other end than to convey to us a message, which, when accompanied by the inner

tion is also a collection of human literature, and in giving it to us God 'has laid upon us the duty and given us the right to examine it as literature, and to determine all its human and literary characteristics by the same methods of research as are applied to the analysis of other ancient books.'¹

To this doctrine of the Reformed Confessions in general and of the symbol of his own Church in particular Professor Robertson Smith loyally and uniformly adhered. He contended that what he had written and spoken regarding the origin, composition, meaning and transmission of the books of the Bible did not traverse anything in the Confession of Faith bearing upon the inspiration, infallible truth, and divine authority of Holy Scripture.

And to this view of matters the Church of which he was at one time a distinguished and admired office-bearer gradually approximated in the course of five years' consideration and discussion. The original libel against the professor gave place to an amended witness of the Spirit, manifests itself as the infallible Word of God, we may for practical purposes say that Scripture *is* the infallible Word of God. Scripture *is*, essentially, what it is its business to convey. But we cannot invert the proposition and say that the infallibility, which belongs to the divine substance of the Word, extends to the outward form of the record, or that the self-evidencing power of the Word as a rule of faith and life extends to expressions in Scripture which are indifferent to faith and life.' *Answer to the Form of Libel*, pp. 25-26.

¹ *Answer to the Form of Libel*, p. 31. The whole of that part of the *Answer* in which Robertson Smith states the doctrine of the Reformed Churches concerning Holy Scripture (pp. 18-44) is of special value. In this connection see an able article by Principal Lindsay of Glasgow—*Professor W. Robertson Smith's Doctrine of Scripture*. *The Expositor*. Fourth Series. Vol. x. 1894.

one constructed by the General Assembly of 1878.¹ The Assembly of 1880 withdrew the amended libel, finding no sufficient ground to support a process for heresy; and in the following year the Supreme Court terminated the case, not by a legislative process nor by a judicial sentence, but by an administrative procedure, which simply appointed that the professor's tenure of his office should cease.² By that time the situation had become tense and complicated in the extreme; and it seemed to those who were masters of exigencies that only by such procedure could the complication be resolved. In thus cutting instead of untying the tangled knot of the Robertson Smith case the Church abstained from pronouncing the critical opinions of the removed teacher to be contrary to the teaching of the Confession of Faith upon the truth, inspiration and authority of the Holy Scripture.

¹ The part of the original Libel which the Assembly amended was the second branch of the abstract major. In the Aberdeen form of Libel that was expressed in these terms, 'The publishing and promulgating of opinions which are in themselves of a dangerous and unsettling tendency in their bearing on the doctrine of the immediate inspiration, infallible truth, and divine authority of the Holy Scriptures, or any part or parts thereof, as set forth in the Scriptures themselves and in the Confession of Faith, and in their bearing on the doctrines of prophecy and angels therein set forth.' For that the Assembly substituted, 'The publishing and promulgating of writings concerning the books of Scripture which by their ill-considered and unguarded setting forth of speculations of a critical kind tend to awaken doubt, especially in the case of students, of the divine truth, inspiration, and authority of any of the books of Scripture, and on the doctrines of angels and prophecy, as the said truth, inspiration, and authority and doctrine of angels and prophecy are set forth in the Scriptures themselves and in the Confession of Faith.' *Proceedings and Debates of the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland, 1878, p. 341.*

² *Ibid.* 1881, pp. 189-90.

In the work of acquainting Scottish students with the methods and conclusions of modern Biblical Criticism Robertson Smith did not stand alone. In the other two Divinity Halls of the historical Free Church of Scotland there were those who worked on the same lines as the Aberdeen professor, men not inferior to him in scholarship, in penetration of intellect, or in loyal adherence to the sum and substance of the doctrine of the Reformed Churches.

In Glasgow there was Alexander Balmain Bruce. The chair in the Free Church College to which Dr Bruce was appointed in 1875 and which he held for twenty-four years, was that of Apologetics and New Testament Exegesis. Such a combination of subjects was anomalous, and in the case of any ordinary man it might have resulted in one or other of the departments of study receiving inadequate treatment. Fortunately, however, Apologetics and New Testament Criticism were the fields of study in which Professor Bruce was most at home and in which he was an acknowledged master. He was an original and erudite exegete; he was an acute, broad-minded, and far-seeing apologist. The apologetic and the exegetic faculties were so developed in the Glasgow divine that one finds it difficult to say which of the two predominated, and which made the richer and more enduring contribution to the theological literature of Scotland. For our purpose the work of Dr Bruce of outstanding value and interest is that which he

entitled *The Kingdom of God; or, Christ's Teaching according to the Synoptical Gospels*.¹

The general purpose of this book is to expound the teaching of our Lord as recorded in the first three Gospel narratives, and the special object of the *Critical Introduction* is to discuss the question, how far these narratives, more particularly the first and third, put their readers in possession of our Lord's teaching in its original form. The opening paragraphs of the Introduction treat of the sources of the Gospel records, on the assumption that, while resting on apostolic tradition, oral or written, they are not, in their present form, by apostolic authors. It is open to inquire whether in any of them we have the *ipsissima verba* of Christ, and in which of them we get nearest to the original form of His sayings. Assuming the correctness of the prevailing opinion in favour of the originality of Matthew's reports of the words, the inquiry ultimately takes the form of an attempt to determine the extent and causes of Luke's variations under the headings of modifications, omissions, and additions. In the case of this evangelist, while it cannot now be known how many documents he used in the compilation of his gospel, two sources supplied the main body of his narrative, and formed, in fact, the basis of all three synoptical books. One of these sources was a collection of *Logia* or Sayings; the other was a collection of narrations similar to, but not identical with the second Gospel

¹ First Edition in 1889. Fourth Edition in 1891.

in its present form. The collection of *Logia* as it was written does not now exist, we can only form acquaintance with it at second hand, and when the extant reports vary we must do our best to determine which version is primary and which is secondary.¹ This was a new departure in Scottish New Testament Criticism. It was new to many to find the question raised whether the Synoptists can be regarded as giving a perfectly trustworthy report of the sayings of Jesus; and the uneasiness created by the raising of the question was only partially allayed when the propounder of it subsequently explained that the expression 'perfectly trustworthy' referred wholly to the reliableness of the sources viewed objectively, not at all to the good faith of the evangelists, which he had not the remotest intention of calling in question.² Then it was new to those who held an extra-confessional and traditional view of Inspiration to be told that the evangelists so far exercised their discretion in the use of their sources as to make the material serviceable to the edification of those for whose special benefit they wrote—'an evangelist,' they were told, 'might with perfect loyalty and a good conscience exercise an editorial discretion in the use of sources.'³ It was startling to many when they found Luke apparently represented as deliberately modifying the words of Jesus in the form

¹ *Critical Introduction*, pp. 1-3. *Proceedings and Debates*. 1890. Appendix to special Report of College Committee. Statement by Professor Bruce, p. 174.

² *Statement, ut sup.* p. 45.

³ *Critical Introduction, ut sup.* pp. 7-9.

reported by Matthew in order to remove an element of apparent legalism from our Lord's utterances, and to bring them into more complete harmony with evangelic or Pauline habits of thought and expression.¹ It was painful to not a few to have it stated with reference to and in explanation of the omission by Luke of the gracious invitation in the eleventh of Matthew that, 'supposing these words were distasteful to him one does not see why he could not substitute for them others more evangelic.'²

So novel, and to some so alarming, were the critical method and conclusions of Professor Bruce in his work on *The Kingdom of God* that both the College Committee and the General Assembly were constrained to examine and pronounce a judgment regarding the book. The Committee reported to the Assembly that they did not find ground of process against Dr Bruce, as teaching doctrine opposed to the standards of the Church; and the Assembly by a large majority approved of that finding, while adding to it a declaration that 'with respect to the inspiration of the Gospels and the reliable character of their reports as to the life and ministry of our blessed Lord, the Assembly find that, by want of due care in his modes of statement, and by his manner of handling debated questions as to the motives and methods of the Evangelists, Dr Bruce has given some ground for the misunderstandings and for the painful impressions which have

¹ *Critical Introduction, ut sup.* p. 8.

² *Ibid.* pp. 34-35.

existed.’¹ Many who voted for that finding were doubtless influenced by the written statement communicated to the College Committee by Professor Bruce and by the speech which he delivered when his case was before the Assembly of 1890. Both in statement and speech the suspected apologist and exegete expressed his belief in the inspiration of the Evangelists. In the former manifesto he reproduced some sentences from a work published by him some four years earlier. One of these is to the effect that ‘these gospels throughout, alike in miracle histories and in discourses, bear the unmistakable stamp of apostolic inspiration, if not of apostolic authorship.’² In his Assembly *Apologia* Dr Bruce expressed the conviction that the Evangelists had an inspiration like that of the apostles, proceeding from the same source—the Divine Spirit, and he asked the Court to note that in the *Critical Introduction* he applied to the former the epithet ‘inspired writers,’ while in representing them as exercising ‘their discretion in the use of their sources so as to make the material serviceable to the edification of those for whose special benefit they wrote,’ he spoke of them as ‘acting, not in a spirit of licence, but with the freedom of men who believed that it was more important that their readers should get a true impression of Christ than that they should

¹ *Proceedings and Debates of the General Assembly of the Free Church*, 1890, p. 146.

² *The Miraculous Element in the Gospels*, pp. 111-12. *Critical Introduction*, *ut sup.* pp. 7-9. *Proceedings and Debates*, *ut sup.* p. 174.

know the *ipsissima verba* of His sayings.’¹ The contention of Dr Bruce was that inspiration does not postulate or imply inerrancy, but that it is compatible with variations, with varying degrees of exactness in the reporting of the *Logia* of our Lord, and that it does not interdict the view that the Evangelists may in some cases have modified the form of the words for good and worthy reasons, such as a regard to the spiritual needs of their first readers.²

In his defence before the General Assembly Professor Bruce gave utterance to these striking sentences:

The conviction that the Gospels were not ‘cunningly devised fables’ has influenced my whole public life. My great aim as a preacher, a professor, and an author has been to show Jesus Christ as I had found Him in the Gospels. This is the leading motive of all my books, from the *Training of the Twelve* to *The Kingdom of God*. I went to College in 1845, less than fifteen years old. It is not good for youth to know too soon the evil that is in the world, even though it be necessary evil. I made my escape from the strife of the Churches to the teaching of Jesus—where I saw in its brightness and unearthly beauty

¹ *College Committee Report*, 1890, *ut sup.* p. 46.

² It was open to Dr Bruce to strengthen his position regarding variations by a reference to the statement of the College Committee. ‘While different views may be taken of the doctrine of Inspiration,’ reported the sub-committee, of which Principal Rainy was Convener, ‘all views alike are consistent with admitting different accounts of the same transactions . . . As regards reports of sayings and discourses, Inspiration does not guarantee verbatim reporting more than any other kind of reporting.’

the Christian ideal. I have been looking at the Church in the dazzling light of the King and the Kingdom. I have been trying all my life to see Jesus, and to show Him. I trust I shall be able in the evening of my days to look back on the unpleasant incidents of the present year partly as the needful discipline of my infirmities, but partly also as the honourable 'marks of the Lord Jesus.'¹ Such sentences as these will be remembered for many a day by the friends and the students of one who was a reverent interpreter of the Word, a resolute defender of all the articles of the Faith, and a loyal servant of the Church.

The life-work of Dr Robertson Smith and of Professor Bruce in the field of Criticism was carried on with a considerable amount of publicity, now and again in storm and stress, and in the case of both not without compearance before ecclesiastical courts on charges of heretical teaching or of unsettling tendency. It was altogether different in the case of a third Scotch critic of the 19th century, whose contributions to Biblical Criticism equal in value those of his fellow-professors at Aberdeen and Glasgow. For Professor A. B. Davidson, of the New College, Edinburgh, was a student pure and simple, who kept himself free from occupation with affairs lying beyond his own province, who never lifted up his voice in a Church court and never figured in an ecclesiastical case.

¹ *Proceedings and Debates of the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland*, 1890, pp. 176-77.

And yet from his secluded study and quiet class-room there went forth an influence and an impulse not inferior in extent and intensesness to that of any Hebrew scholar and critic of his day. With his pen Professor Davidson made numerous contributions to theological literature,¹ and by his teaching as Professor of Hebrew and Old Testament Exegesis, extending over well-nigh forty years, he did much to modify traditional views and to open up departments of research hitherto closed to the Scottish student. But his opinions on questions of criticism were formed with deliberation and caution, and were expressed with such judicial balance and moderation that the enunciating and publishing of them created no uneasiness and drew forth no overtures for examination or condemnation. In this connection it is interesting to note that Professor Robertson Smith wrote the article 'Bible' for the *Encyclopædia Britannica* in 1875. We have seen how the heather was fired by that article. Thirteen years later, Professor Davidson wrote upon the very same subject for *Chambers's Encyclopædia*.² In the later article of the Edinburgh Professor substantially the same questions are raised and dealt with as in that of the northern scholar. It is stated, for example, as a thing hardly credible that the mass of minute and highly developed ritual ordi-

¹ In the formation of a complete and dated list of Prof. Davidson's articles and reviews, together with an enumeration of his books, a hopeful beginning has been made by the Rev. James Strachan in the *Expository Times*, vol. xv. No. 10, July 1904, pp. 450-55.

² *New Edition*, vol. ii. pp. 117-29.

nances in the Pentateuch came, in its present form, from the pen of Moses. Thereafter the analysis of the Pentateuch, or rather Hexateuch, into its primary elements and the relative ages of these elements are lucidly sketched. Then follows an estimate of the strength and the weakness of the documentary theory, and it is pointed out that if it be valid then 'the Law, as we know it, was not the starting-point of Israel's history, but its goal; the prophets did not expound the Law, the Law is a precipitate that formed around the prophetic truths.' The reconstruction of the earlier books of the Old Testament propounded by modern critics, does not go, it was pointed out, on the supposition that the ritual laws were *all* for the first time evolved at a very late date; it is reasonable to suppose that they grew up gradually in priestly circles and were only finally collected and codified at a later period.¹

Of the structure, contents and date of other Old Testament writings Dr Davidson wrote at other times and in other publications with a freedom which equalled that of Professors Smith and Bruce, but with a weighty judiciousness to which they could not lay claim. Thus the book of Job, as it now lies before us, he had no hesitation in assigning to the period in Hebrew literature between David and the return from the Exile. The book itself is not to be taken as history, although it rests upon a historical tradition; the speeches of Elihu have grave suspicion

¹ *New Edition*, pp. 119-21.

attaching to them, they do not belong to the original cast of the book but have been introduced at a considerably later time.¹ Of Ecclesiastes the date cannot be determined with certainty. The book may belong to the time of the later Persian rule or it may be a product of the Greek period. No doubt at the outset the verdicts on life are attributed to Solomon, but this 'transparent disguise' is speedily abandoned, and the book, as it now exists, is probably to be assigned to the latter part of the third century B.C.²

The work of Professor Davidson which contains the mellowed fruits of strenuous study and the final verdicts of a powerful, incisive intellect upon questions of criticism is the posthumous volume, *The Theology of the Old Testament*.³ In the opening chapter of this classic production of Scottish scholarship the author starts from the position that Old Testament Theology is neither a finished production nor a torso. It is a development, a growth, the parts of which follow one another in orderly succession, through a long period of time. The literature which exhibits this historical growth or evolution the writer assigns to the following periods.

First. The period of tradition religiously coloured terminating with the Exodus. From this preliminary period no literature has come

¹ Article "Job" in *Encyc. Brit.* 1881. *Chambers's Encyc.* 1890.

² Article "Ecclesiastes" in *Encyc. Biblica.* 1901.

³ International Theological Library. *The Theology of the Old Testament.* By the late A. B. Davidson, D.D., LL.D., Litt.D. Edited by S. D. F. Salmond, D.D., F.E.I.S. 1904.

down to us. All we have is the view taken of it in the ninth and eighth centuries B.C.

Second. The period from the Exodus to written prophecy (B.C. 800). During this period two great streams of thought and composition can be traced. (1) Prophecy. Examples of this are found in Deborah, Samuel, Elijah, Elisha and such historical writings as Judges and the books of Samuel. (2) Legislation. Here can be put with certainty the Book of the Covenant (Exodus xx.-xxiii.), and probably some Psalms and Proverbs, as also a good deal of the history found in Genesis, Exodus, Numbers and Joshua.

Third. The period from the beginning of written prophecy to the Exile of Judah (B.C. 586). Here also we have Prophecy and Legislation. The great prophets belong to this period—Amos, Hosea, Micah, Isaiah, and Jeremiah. In Legislation we have the book of Deuteronomy, discovered in the Temple (B.C. 621) and made public in the same year.

Fourth. The period from the Exile to the close of the prophetic canon (B.C. 400). The literature of this prolific period contains four sections of canonical compositions.

(1) Prophecy. Ezekiel belongs to this era, also Zechariah, Haggai, Malachi and Isaiah II.

- (2) Legislation. The Priestly or Levitical Legislation (Exodus xxv.-xl.), Leviticus and a large portion of Numbers.
- (3) The Psalter as collected and adapted to the devotional service of the Temple.
- (4) The Wisdom Books. Some of the most splendid fruits of the reflective mind of Israel—such as the Book of Job—probably date from this epoch.

Fifth. The period from the close of the prophetic canon to the Christian era. This period embraces in Prophecy, Daniel; in Wisdom, Ecclesiastes; and in History, Chronicles.¹

The closing section of the first chapter in this distinct and weighty contribution to a great subject, treats of 'Literary and Historical Criticism in relation to Old Testament Theology.' At the outset it is taken as admitted by all competently furnished Biblical critics that the order in which Old Testament literature now exists is not the historical one, and that traditional ideas regarding both date and authorship require sifting. The Pentateuch, for example, is admittedly not a homogeneous work, it is not the composition of one person, living and writing at a very early date. It is acknowledged on all hands that it consists of a number of distinct writings, originating at different periods, and brought together at various times, that it gradually assumed its present shape, not earlier than about 500 B.C., and that there are portions of

¹ *The Theology of the Old Testament*, pp. 15-20.

it later even than that date. The same remark applies to the prophetic writings. The Hebrew prophets were not careful to collect their prophecies, and so these utterances, as we have them, are the work of collectors or editors, who often grouped together individual prophecies of different dates and even of different ages, according to subject, and who, occasionally at least, made insertions in order to render the prophecies applicable to the thought and religious needs of their own times.¹

What Professor Davidson terms 'the newest criticism'—partly *textual* and partly *literary*—is represented in the remaining paragraphs of the section as moving mainly on three lines. 1. In endeavouring to extract real history from the traditional or legendary of the early narrative of the world's history, of the patriarchal period, and partly even of the Exodus narrative; in tracing the affinities of the Scripture narrative with early Babylonian traditions; and in answering such inquiries as, How far are the Patriarchs real personages, how far are they ideal types of nationalities or of the true Israel or the true Israelite? 2. In discussing matters of Textual Criticism. Such matters, for example, as the text of early poetical prophecy, and the extent to which it is permissible and safe to introduce changes into early prophetic pieces and into such books as Job and the Psalter. 3. In prosecuting Literary Criticism. In this department of higher criticism two principles are

¹ *The Theology of the Old Testament*, p. 28.

proceeded upon. (1) The Hebrew language, in common with all languages, has a history. In process of time the vocabulary changes, so also, to some extent, does the syntax. (2) The thought of the Hebrew people has a history. These postulates admitted, the task of the higher or literary criticism is to apply them in order to separate the constituent elements out of which the present books have been composed, and to show which is ancient and which is recent. Such processes of criticism are quite legitimate; as a matter of fact no other method is open. At the same time the literary critical process must needs be a delicate and difficult one, it gives perilous opening for subjective and individual judgment. It has to be borne in mind that the literature is very limited, and that an idea found now only in a late writing might be ascertained to belong to an earlier time had the literary remains of that time been more extensive. As it is, the tendency of the higher criticism is to 'cut up the writings, particularly the prophecies, into a multitude of fragments, and to introduce the greatest uncertainty into the exegesis.' 'I cannot help thinking,' so runs the closing sentence, 'that this kind of criticism has gone to extremes in recent times, and has had the effect of discrediting the criticism which is legitimate.'¹

Such are the conclusions of this eminently sane and cautious Scotch Hebraist. They exhibit the latest, although probably not the last critical reconstruction

¹ *The Theology of the Old Testament*, p. 30.

of Old Testament literature. Some of the results of the method adopted and of the analysis carried out will not find acceptance with those who adhere to the traditional view of things. The opponents of criticism, whether higher or newer, will refuse to admit the presence of myth and legend in the early history of the world as given in Genesis. They will reject the critical opinion that Deuteronomy only dates as far back as the seventh century B.C., and they will continue to believe that Moses was the author of the greater part of the book as well as of all the other books of the Pentateuch.¹

Had the questions as to the origin, history, literary form, and character of the canonical books to which such different answers are returned by traditionalists and scientists been pronounced upon in the Westminster symbol, then it might have been necessary to say that modern Biblical criticism is not only extra-confessional, which every one admits it to be, but that it is also contra-confessional. It is not so, however, and that for two reasons. First, because the textual and literary questions now so keenly debated had not emerged when the seventeenth century symbol was drawn up. And second, because the authors of that symbol, while proclaiming the fact of Inspiration and accepting the truths of the infalli-

¹ For an up-to-date Outline of the Results of Old Testament Criticism see Appendix to an admirable work by a brilliant student of Glasgow and Oxford, now Professor of Old Testament Literature and Exegesis in Knox College, Toronto—*Old Testament Criticism and the Christian Church*. By John Edgar M'Fadyen, M.A. (Glas.), B.A. (Oxon.). 1903.

bility and authority of Scripture, were careful to leave the manner and the method, the implicates and the inferences of Inspiration open questions. What Canon Liddon asserted of the Church of Christ generally holds true in a special sense of the Westminster divines—they have not propounded any authoritative definition of what the inspiration of Holy Scripture is, of what it does or does not permit or imply. In this connection the words of a still higher authority than the Anglican divine—Professor Mitchell of St Andrews—are weighty and conclusive. ‘If any chapter in the Confession,’ writes the editor of the Assembly Minutes, ‘was more carefully framed than another, it was this ‘Of the Holy Scripture.’ It formed the subject of repeated and earnest debate in the House of Commons as well as in the Assembly; and I think it requires only to be fairly examined to make it appear that its framers were so far from desiring to go beyond their predecessors in rigour, that they were at more special pains than the authors of any other Confession—1. To avoid mixing up the question of the canonicity of particular books with the question of their authorship, where any doubt at all existed on the latter point; 2. To leave open all reasonable questions as to the mode and degree of inspiration which could consistently be left open by those who accepted the Scriptures as the *infallible rule* of faith and duty.’¹

¹ *Minutes of the Sessions of the Westminster Assembly of Divines.* Introduction, xlix.-l.

So far, then, as the Westminster Confession is concerned there is nothing in its opening chapter to preclude or foreclose the investigations of modern criticism. The conclusions arrived at by such Biblical scholars and critics as Geddes, Robertson Smith, Bruce and Davidson, do not conflict with the truths of the inspiration, infallibility, and authority of the Bible, although they may, and in some cases do conflict with inferences drawn from the confessional doctrine of Scripture and which are arrived at by pressing the words of the symbol beyond the limits which the whole scope of the doctrine can fairly be held to prescribe.

LECTURE V.

READJUSTMENTS OF SCOTTISH CONFESSIONS AS EXHIBITIONS OF THE EXISTING FAITH, AND AS BONDS OF AGREEMENT AND ADHERENCE.

WILLIAM DUNLOP, Professor of Church History in Edinburgh University, contributed a preliminary dissertation to the valuable *Collection of Confessions of Faith, etc.*, published at Edinburgh in 1719.¹ In 145 closely printed pages the young and early called away Professor sets forth the purposes or ends of what, in archaic language, are styled 'such humane composures,' and vindicates their 'equity, usefulness, and excellency.' According to Dunlop the uses of Creeds and Confessions may be grouped under three general heads. The first purpose served by Church symbols is to give a fair and authentic account of Christian doctrine to the world; the second is to furnish a standard of orthodoxy and test for office-bearers; and the third is to provide the members of the Church with a useful summary of the articles of the faith.² Professor Philip Schaff of Union Theo-

¹ *A Collection of Confessions of Faith, Catechisms, Directories, Books of Discipline, etc. Of Publick Authority in the Church of Scotland.* 2 vols. Edinburgh. 1719. Best known as *Dunlop's Collection*.

² Substantially the same uses of creeds and confessions are specified by Prof. Bannerman, although the order of enumeration is slightly different. *The Church of Christ.* Vol. i. Pt. iii. Div. i. ch. ii. pp. 296-99.

logical Seminary, New York, the greatest Protestant authority on Symbolics, sets forth the uses of creeds in four particulars: They are Summaries of the doctrines of the Bible; Aids to its sound understanding; Bonds of union among their professors; Public Standards and guards against false doctrine and practice.¹

For practical purposes, however, the uses of symbols may be reduced to two. First. They are exhibitions or manifestoes of the Christian Faith to those within and those beyond the pale of the Church. Second. They are bonds of agreement and adhesion for the use of the office-bearers and members of the Church.

Now, the attitude and action of the Church in relation to her symbols differ in the case of these two uses. When the Church is moved to deal with confessions as summaries of revealed truth apprehended by her at certain stages of her history she acts in a way distinct from that in which she deals with the same documents as standards of orthodoxy and tests for admission to office, appropriate with reference to the existing circumstances of the time and the existing form and stage of men's thoughts. The line of separation in the two cases may not always be apparent, and there may now and again be a measure of overlapping in the twofold treatment of the symbolic books.

¹ Schaff's *Creeds*, vol. i, p. 8.

I. SCOTTISH CONFESSIONS AS EXHIBITIONS OF THE EXISTING FAITH.

At the same time, it will not be difficult to show that in the case of the Church of Scotland, at all events, her treatment of her Subordinate Standards viewed as exhibitions of Biblical truth has a marked individuality not to be found in her treatment of them as documents to be subscribed and adhered to. If it be inquired, what is that marked individuality? the investigations carried on in previous lectures are fitted to supply material for an answer. For if there is one thing more clear than another surely it is this, that in Scotland no summary or manifesto has ever been regarded as possessing perfection and finality, that each successive symbol, as it has been framed and adopted, has been regarded as possibly open to objection at some points and capable of improvement at others, and that symbol after symbol has been laid aside in favour of a new one considered to be a more fitting exposition of 'the present truth'¹ and the existing faith.

Although it may involve some repetition let us make a rapid survey of the ground gone over in our first lecture, which treated of the symbols used in the Church of Scotland prior to 1647.

From use in the Celtic and the Roman Churches up to the middle of the sixteenth century the Apostles' Creed passed into usage in the Reformed Church of

¹ 2 Peter i. 12. . . . 'the truth which is with you.' R.V.

Scotland, and obtained a place in the Book of Common Order prepared and used by Knox and Willock at Geneva, and thereafter approved and received by the Kirk of Scotland. It was employed in the administration of the baptismal sacrament, in the catechising of the young, and in the praise of the congregation. But for reasons not requiring to be stated in this connection the venerable *symbolum apostolicum* gradually passed out of use and out of sight and hearing in the Church of the seventeenth century. It ceased to be employed for catechetical, confessional, and ritual purposes when the Westminster Directories regulated the Family and the Public Worship of God.

Next in the order of early Scottish symbols came the Confession of 1560. When describing this first original product of national creed-making we noted how those who drafted it quite frankly admitted their fallibility and invited amendments, and it is unnecessary to repeat, what have been so often quoted, the words in which the admission was made and the invitation was extended. But it may not be out of place to supplement the statement in that connection with a passing reference to a striking and apposite declaration of George Wishart, the precursor and preceptor of Knox, when translating the Former or First Helvetic Confession of 1536. After completing his task the martyr Scot adds this declaration for the benefit of his countrymen: 'It is not our mind for to prescribe by these brief chapters a certain rule of

the faith to all churches and congregations, for we know no other rule of faith but the Holy Scripture; and, therefore, we are well contented with them that agree with these things, howbeit they use another manner of speaking or Confession, different partly to this of ours in words; for rather should the matter be considered than the words. And, therefore, we make it free for all men to use their own sort of speaking, as they shall perceive most profitable for their Churches, and we shall use the same liberty. And if any man will attempt to corrupt the true meaning of this our Confession, he shall hear both a confession and a defence of the verity and truth. It was our pleasure to use these words at the present time, that we might declare our opinion in our religion and worshipping of God. The truth will have the upper hand.'¹

After the first Scots Confession of 1560 there comes, at no long interval, that which has for alternative title 'The National Covenant.' Throughout what is stated in several of the paragraphs to be 'this our confession' there are references to the earlier symbol. It is said to express with greater fulness the true Christian Faith and Religion pleasing to God and bringing salvation to men, now by the mercy of God revealed to the world by the preaching of the blessed evangel, and received, believed and defended in a notable way by the Kirk of Scotland. While there is thus

¹ The tract with full information regarding the translation, forms the first piece in the Wodrow *Miscellany*.

emphatic adherence to the old Confession in this General Confession of Faith there are in it, as printed in collections of Confessions and Subordinate Standards of Churches, additions made from time to time at what were regarded as crises in the affairs of Church and State. And so, in the explanatory statement prefixed to modern reprints of the document it is described as ‘subscribed by Barons, Nobles, Gentlemen, Burgesses, Ministers, and Commons, in the year 1638, with a general bond for the maintaining of the true Christian religion, and the King’s person; and together with a resolution and promise, for the cause after expressed, to maintain the true religion, and the King’s Majesty, according to the foresaid Confession and acts of Parliament.’ In its primary form this Confession of Faith and National Covenant, as subscribed ‘by the King’s Majesty (James VI.) and his Household,’ ends with a prayer that God would be to the subscribers a strong and merciful defender in the day of death and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doxology, ‘to whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit be all honour and glory eternally. Amen.’ In its final form, as ‘subscribed by King Charles II. at Spey, June 23, 1650, and Scoon, January 1, 1651,’ the same Confession winds up with a solemn invocation—‘We call the LIVING GOD, THE TEACHER OF OUR HEARTS, to witness, who knoweth this to be our sincere desire and unfeigned resolution, as we shall answer to JESUS CHRIST in the great day, and under pain of God’s everlasting wrath, and of infamy and loss of all

honour and respect in this world: most humbly beseeching the LORD to strengthen us by His HOLY SPIRIT for this end, and to bless our desires and proceedings with a happy success; that religion and righteousness may flourish in the land, to the glory of God, the honour of our King, and peace and comfort of us all.'

It was pointed out in the opening lecture that the Aberdeen Confession of 1616 is a Calvinistic symbol having merit and excellences of its own which have not received a due meed of recognition. It never secured more publicity than is implied in having a place in the *Book of the Universal Kirk of Scotland*, but passed almost from its birth-time into obscurity. It was a product of the first Episcopacy in Scotland, and the only Assembly that ever approved of it was the packed, prelatic one convened by royal 'consent, license, permission, and allowance' at the granite city of the north. These things render it unnecessary to say anything as to the relation of the Church of Scotland to this symbol as an exhibition of the Christian Faith for those within and those beyond her pale. And so we pass at once to the Westminster Confession of Faith.

Here, if anywhere in symbolic theology, one might look for a final and immutable exhibition of the Protestant faith. For the Westminster symbol is the last and greatest of its order. In point of time it stands at the close of the great creeds of the Evangelical Reformed Churches, creeds which have worthy

inauguration in the Zwinglian Articles of 1523, and equally worthy continuance in the Old Scots Confession of 1560, the Irish Articles of 1615, and the Dort Canons of 1619. When we pass from it we get in among modern denominational standards, starting with the Savoy Declaration of 1658, which is merely a modification of the Westminster symbol to suit the Congregational polity.¹ And as the relation of the Confession framed at Westminster to other Reformed symbols might seem to invest it with finality so the position assigned it in the constitution and practice of the Scottish Churches might appear to warrant it being regarded as immutable. From the date of its approval and adoption in 1647 down to the present day it has been the existing creed of all the Churches in Scotland represented in the Alliance of Reformed Churches holding the Presbyterian system. And substantially it has remained unchanged for more than two hundred years as an exhibition of Augustinian or Calvinistic theology. As will appear afterwards there are Churches which, exercising their Christian liberty, seeking light in God's Word and leading from the Holy Spirit, have made additions to or modifications of Westminster teaching; but these have ever maintained that in so doing they have left untouched the sum and the substance of that teaching, while making declarations of certain aspects of revealed truth which appear, in altered circumstances, to require more explicit statement or fuller treatment.

¹ Schaff's *Creeds*, vol i. p. 829; vol. iii. p. 707.

And there are jurists, judges and ecclesiastics who emphatically deny that any Church which has the Westminster Confession for its existing creed can depart from its 'form of sound words'¹ in the smallest particular, and who affirm that to pass Declaratory Acts or make Declaratory Statements even on points in the Confession that do not enter into the substance of the Reformed Faith as therein set forth is to act in an unconstitutional and illegal manner, and can only be done by a Church at the risk of losing its identity and being stript of its property. There could hardly be a more effective way than this of clothing the seventeenth-century manifesto with the qualities of infallibility, finality, and immutability.

In these circumstances it is of importance to ascertain how this symbol was regarded by those who framed it in England, and, thereafter, by those who adopted it in Scotland.

Did those who were the authors of the Westminster Confession claim for it infallibility? Did they send it forth as a final exhibition of the Reformed faith, never afterwards to be altered, curtailed, or expanded? A very brief examination of its contents will make it abundantly clear that they never did anything of the kind, and that they did precisely the opposite.

Three references to explicit statements in the document will suffice. (1) If the Church is in possession of an infallible standard then she has an infallible rule for the determining of all questions about the

¹ 2 Tim. i. 13 . . . 'the pattern of sound words.' R.V.

interpretation of Scripture, and she needs no person to be judge and give final sentence regarding matters of controversy. But what says the Confession on this subject? In the opening Chapter—‘Of the Holy Scripture’—these emphatic averments are made: ‘The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself: and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one) it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly. The supreme Judge by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of Councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture.’¹

(2) The noble Puritan utterance as to the relation of God to the conscience is well known, being often quoted. When taken in its entirety it is an assertion of the right of private judgment, liberty of conscience, and the valid use of reason in all matters which are simply human doctrines and ordinances. ‘God alone,’ so runs the statement, ‘is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are, in any thing, contrary to His Word; or beside it, if matters of faith or worship. So that, to believe such doctrines, or to obey such commands, out of conscience, is to betray true liberty of conscience: and the requiring of an implicit faith,

¹ Chap. I. ix., x.

and an absolute and blind obedience is to destroy liberty of conscience, and reason also.’¹ (3) The Thirty-first Chapter—‘Of Synods and Councils’—was one of the two which proved distasteful to the English Parliament, and so it is omitted in the parliamentary version of the ‘Articles of Christian Religion.’ None the less, perhaps all the more on that account, it is of value for what it affirms regarding such ecclesiastical Courts as Assemblies, synods, and councils. So far from regarding their Assembly as terminating the succession of such courts the divines of the Jerusalem Chamber make provision for future convocations, stating clearly and fully the kind of work competent for them to engage in, and how their work is to be received. ‘It belongeth,’ so runs the carefully worded article, ‘to synods and councils, ministerially to determine controversies of faith and cases of conscience, to set down rules and directions for the better ordering of the public worship of God, and government of His Church, to receive complaints in cases of maladministration, and authoritatively to determine the same: which decrees and determinations, if consonant to the Word of God, are to be received with reverence and submission; not only for their agreement with the Word, but also for the power whereby they are made, as being an ordinance

¹ Chap XX. ii. In most editions of the Confession the third clause of the first sentence reads ‘*in matters of faith or worship.*’ So also the Latin translation—*in rebus fidei et cultus.*’ Mr William Carruthers, in his accurate reprint of the Confession, has restored the clause to its proper form—‘*if matters of faith or worship.*’

of God appointed thereunto in His 'Word.'¹ That statement is followed up by one which is, if possible, still more cogent as proof that, whatever others may have claimed for their doctrinal determinations, it never occurred to the authors of them to profess to be infallible, or to claim perfection and finality for their Confessional deliverances. 'All synods or councils,' they say, 'since the Apostles' times, whether general or particular, may err; and many have erred; therefore they are not to be made the rule of faith or practice, but to be used as an help in both.'² That admission includes and was surely intended to be as applicable to the Assembly of divines at Westminster, as to the œcumenical Council held at Nicea in 325, to the Congregation gathered in Edinburgh to frame the Confession of 1560, or to the Convocation of Irish Protestant Clergy who met at Dublin in 1615 to frame their 'Articles of Religion.'

These references to the contents of the Confession are sufficient to show that the framers of the document never intended their exhibition of the Reformed Faith to be regarded as final and immutable, not admitting of revision, incapable of improvement, any more than they thought of claiming for themselves doctrinal infallibility, verbal inerrancy.

In what light, we proceed to inquire, did those in Scotland who first accepted and adopted the symbol regard the manifesto which commissioners from their side of the Border had an important share in formulating?

¹ Chap. XXXI. iii.

² *Ibid.* iv.

When narrating the external history of the Westminster Confession we noted the fact that it received the approval of the Scottish General Assembly on the 27th of August 1647. The ground of this approval was expressly declared to be that, having been 'twice publicly read over, examined, and considered,' the Assembly found it to be 'most agreeable to the word of God, and in nothing contrary to the received doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of this Kirk.' And so, after mature deliberation, the Church of Scotland agreed unto and approved of the said Confession 'as to the truth of the matter (judging it to be most orthodox, and grounded upon the word of God),' agreeing for their part 'that it be a common Confession of Faith for the three Kingdoms.'¹

But in the very act of doing this the Church of Scotland claimed and acted upon the right which came to her 'by the intrinsical power received from Christ'—to use her own language—the right to declare her mind upon certain matters in the Confession regarding which her intention and meaning might otherwise be misunderstood. She qualified her acceptance with declaratory statements about two subjects the exhibition of which seemed to her open to improvement. First. It was 'expressly declared and provided, That the not mentioning in this Confession the several sorts of ecclesiastical officers and assemblies, shall be no prejudice to the truth of Christ in these particulars, to be expressed fully in

¹ *Acts of General Assembly, 1638-1842*, pp 158-59.

the Directory of Government.’¹ The reason for this qualifying statement is to be found in the vague character of confessional teaching regarding the office-bearers, the courts, and the censures of the Church. Owing to the growing influence of the Independents at Westminster, nothing was allowed to find a place in the chapters dealing with these matters that would seem to favour the presbyterian polity, or to infer a

¹ In addition to the preparation of *The Directory for the Publick Worship of God* and *The Directory for Family Worship* the Westminster divines engaged in drawing up two treatises on Church Government. The first of these had for its original title, *Propositions concerning the Officers, Assemblies, and Government of the Kirk; and concerning the Ordination of Ministers*, but finally came to be known as *The Form of Presbyterial Church-Government and of Ordination of Ministers*. This *Form*, after being ‘thrice read and diligently examined,’ was agreed to and approved of by the Scottish General Assembly in 1645 (Feb. 10, Sess. 16). It is printed along with the Confession and Catechisms and the above named Directories in all collections of Westminster documents. The second treatise when completed was delivered by its framers to the Houses of Parliament in 1645, was laid before the Scottish Assembly in 1647, and printed before the close of that year in order to be ‘examined by the several Presbyteries against the then next General Assembly.’ To this document was given the title *A Directory for Church Government and Ordination of Ministers*. It was bound up with a tractate ascribed to Alexander Henderson—*The Government and Order of the Church of Scotland*, and re-printed at Edinburgh in 1690. It is also inserted in a volume of *Confessions of Faith, Catechisms, Directories, Forms of Church Government, Discipline, etc., of Publick Authority in the Church of Scotland*, intended to be a supplement to Dunlop’s *Collection* and published at Edinburgh in 1725. It is, of course, to this second treatise that the approving Act of 1647 refers. Of it Professor Mitchell writes, ‘it, as well as the Propositions, was left unsanctioned at the Revolution, and it is not now nearly so well known as it ought to be.’ ‘It is practical and comprehensive, a storehouse of valuable counsels as to many things in Government, and still more in discipline, not touched on in the propositions, and is well worthy of being studied by Presbyterian ministers still, who wish to do full justice to the system of government the Westminster Assembly sanctioned.’ *The Westminster Assembly: its History and Standards*, 1883. Lec. viii. p. 264.

Divine right and a Scripture warrant for any form of Church government. Even the general statements of the chapters proved unpalatable to English Independents. This was proved in the year following that in which the Confession was adopted in Scotland. For in the first Parliamentary edition of the symbol, printed in 1648, under the title of *Articles of Christian Religion approved and passed by both Houses of Parliament*, the chapters 'of Church Censures' and 'of Synods and Councils' are omitted.¹

But that there might be no mistake as to the position of the presbyterian Church of Scotland in this matter reference is made in the approving and adopting act to another Westminster document in the preparation of which the Scottish Commissioners took a leading part, but which had not in 1647 received the sanction of their supreme court—*A Directory for Church Government, Church Censures, and Ordination of Ministers*. In this document it is declared that, while Apostles, Prophets, and Evangelists were extraordinary officers in the Church, the Pastor is an ordinary and perpetual office-bearer, so also is the Teacher, the Elder, and the Deacon. It is further affirmed that 'it is lawful, and agreeable to the Word of God that the Church be governed by several sorts of Assemblies, which are Presbyteries and Synods, or

¹ *The Confession of Faith of the Assembly of Divines at Westminster with the Texts of Scripture annexed. From the Original Edition printed, under the care of the Assembly, by order of the House of Commons in 1647; and collated with the Edition issued by Parliament in 1648. London. n. d. Edited by William Carruthers, F.R.S.*

Assemblies, congregational, classical, and synodical.' With equal explicitness the Congregational form of church government is pronounced unscriptural. 'To gather Churches into an Independent form of Government out of Churches of a Presbyterial form of Government, upon an opinion that the Presbyterial Government is unlawful, is not lawful or warranted by the word of God. Nor is it lawful for any member of a Parochial Congregation, if the ordinances be there administered in purity, to go and seek them elsewhere ordinarily.'

Second. The Confession in its chapter, 'Of Synods and Councils' laid down this proposition: 'As magistrates may lawfully call a synod of ministers, and other fit persons, to consult and advise with, about matters of religion; so, if magistrates be open enemies to the Church, the ministers of Christ of themselves, by virtue of their office, or they, with other fit persons upon delegation from their Churches, may meet together in such assemblies.'¹

That statement seemed to the Church of Scotland too sweeping in the power it gave both to magistrates and ministers. Accordingly it was accepted on the understanding that it applied only to 'Kirks not settled, or constituted in point of government.' Although in such churches a synod of Ministers, and other fit persons, may be called by the Magistrates' authority and nomination, without any other call, to consult and advise with about matters of religion,

¹ Chap. XXXI. ii.

and the Ministers of Christ may also meet together synodical of themselves and in virtue of their office, without delegation from their churches, yet neither of these steps ought to be taken in 'Kirks constituted and settled.'

To these qualifying statements the Church of Scotland added a proviso of which effective use was made at the crisis of 1690 when King William's Commissioner attempted to dissolve an Assembly without the naming of a day for the meeting in the following year. The proviso was in these words: 'it being always free to the Magistrate to advise with synods of Ministers and Ruling Elders, meeting upon delegation from their churches, either ordinarily, or, being indicted by his authority, occasionally, and *pro re nata*; it being also free to assemble, as well *pro re nata* as at the ordinary times, upon delegation from the churches, by the intrinsical power received from Christ, as often as it is necessary for the good of the church so to assemble, in case the Magistrate, to the detriment of the Church, withhold or deny his consent; the necessity of occasional assemblies being first remonstrated [pointed out] unto him by humble supplication.'

These modifications and that proviso under which the Church of Scotland accepted the Westminster symbol as an exhibition of the existing Faith may not seem of great importance. They certainly do not affect the substance of the new symbol. They have, however, a significance and a value not easily over-

rated. For they make it abundantly clear that not even when it came fresh from the hands of its framers was the international manifesto of Reformed doctrine received in Scotland without explanation and without declaratory statement. Larger qualifications, more important modifications were made afterwards, as will appear the further we proceed ; but it ought not to be overlooked nor forgotten that the Church of Scotland entered upon a course of readjustment of her existing Confession as far back as 1647, and in the very act of adopting her new symbol as a whole.

II. SCOTTISH CONFESSIONS AS BONDS OF AGREEMENT AND ADHERENCE.

The using symbols as formulas and bonds of agreement and adherence is as old as the employing of them to exhibit 'the present truth' and the existing faith of the Church. There is clear proof of this in the literary form of the oldest creeds of Christendom. These ancient documents generally take the personal form and contain a recital of articles of belief on the part of catechumens when received into the membership of the Church at baptism and in the case of members appointed to office. The Rules of Faith¹ to be found among ecclesiastical writings of the second and third centuries and the œcumenical Creeds are all dominated by the formula, *Credo ergo Confiteor*.

¹ For the *Regulæ Fidei* of the primitive Church see Schaff's *Creeds* vol. ii. pp. 11-41.

In course of time acceptance of and adherence to the belief of the Church by adhibited subscription took the place of oral recital. At what precise period of time this change was effected in Scotland the imperfect condition of ecclesiastical records renders it difficult to determine. This much we know that, as the 'godly bands,' covenants and deeds of association of early Reformation times were subscribed by those who entered into them, so the earliest symbols of these days were cast in the form of personal Creeds and were accepted by simple subscription.

Thus, the first Scots Confession of 1560 opens with the words, 'We confess and acknowledge,' and that or an equivalent expression occurs at the commencement of the more important articles. Nine years later the Regent Moray and the Superintendent of Angus proposed that the professors of King's College, Aberdeen, of whose conduct complaint had been made, should sign a formula, beginning with the declaration, 'We whose names are underwritten do ratify and approve from our very hearts the Confession of Faith.'¹

The second Scots Confession or National Covenant, it is hardly necessary to observe, was cast in such a mould as implied simple personal subscription—'We all and every one of us under-written, protest,' is its first affirmation; and that is followed up, a few lines further on, with the statement, 'we believe with our hearts, confess with our mouths, subscribe with our

¹ Calderwood's *History*, vol. ii. pp. 491-92.

hands, and constantly affirm, before God and the whole world.'

In the case of the Westminster Confession individual acceptance was indicated for a time by adhibiting the signature to a copy of the symbol. On the restoration of Presbytery in 1690 an Act was passed by the General Assembly of that year 'anent subscribing the Confession of Faith,' in which 'all probationers licensed to preach, all intrants into the ministry, and all other ministers and elders received into communion with us, in Church government' are required 'to subscribe their approbation of the Confession of Faith, approven by former General Assemblies of this Church and ratified in the second session of the current Parliament.'¹

The first step in the direction of a formula of subscription distinct from the Confession was taken by the Scottish Parliament in 1693. In the interests of Episcopalians willing to submit to presbyterian government and subscribe the Westminster documents there was passed an act bearing the soothing but unrealised title, 'For Settling the Quiet and Peace of the Church,'² an act which, while it 'introduced and still regulates the subscription to the Westminster Confession, had the unfortunate effect of both excluding the Episcopalians, and greatly increasing the irritation and alarm of the Presbyterian Church.'³

¹ Acts, *ut sup.* p. 225.

² Tarbet's *Laws and Acts of Parliament*, pp. 355-57.

³ *The Law of Creeds in Scotland.* By A. Taylor Innes. Chap. ii. p. 79.

In this piece of legislation our Sovereign Lord and Lady, William and Mary, with consent of the estates of Parliament, after confirming the act which ratified the Confession further statuted and ordained, 'That no person be admitted or continued for hereafter, to be a Minister or Preacher within this Church, unless that he . . . do subscribe the Confession of Faith. . . . Declaring the same to be the Confession of his Faith, and that he owns the Doctrine therein contained, to be the true Doctrine which he will constantly adhere to.'

The first Assembly that met thereafter gave ecclesiastical effect to this civil enactment, but in doing so was careful to note that the Confession had been 'approven by former General Assemblies of this Church' as well as 'ratified by law in the year 1690.' By this Assembly of 1694 the following formula of acknowledgment and engagement was appointed to be subscribed 'upon the end of the Confession of Faith : —' 'I, —, do sincerely own and declare the above Confession of Faith, approven by former General Assemblies of this Church, and ratified by law in the year 1690, to be the confession of my faith ; and that I own the doctrine therein contained to be the true doctrine, which I will constantly adhere to.'¹

As the Act of 1694 had special, if not exclusive,

¹ *Acts of Assembly, ut sup.* Act approving Overtures anent a Commission of the General Assembly, and Instructions thereto. Sess. 13, April 13, 1694, p. 239.

application to former Episcopal clergymen, and 'elder-ships' are only incidentally mentioned, it was thought good by the Assembly of 1700 to provide that 'all ministers *and ruling elders* belonging to this National Church subscribe the Confession of Faith as the confession of their faith, according to the Act of Assembly, 1690, and the Formula agreed upon in the Assembly held in the year 1694.'¹ And the Assembly of 1704 gave the finishing touch of completeness to the subscribing of the bond by formula, when, for the better ordering of elections of Commissioners to the Supreme Court it appointed and ordained 'that all commissions to ministers and ruling elders from Presbyteries, Universities, and Royal Burghs bear that they have subscribed the Confession of Faith of this Church, according to the 11th Act of the General Assembly, *anno* 1700.'²

On the part both of the Church of the State and of the Churches without State connection there has been a series of departures from that primitive formula of subscription drawn up in 1694; but so far as parliamentary recognition and sanction are concerned there has been no change since the legislation of 1693.³ In the case of the Established Church ruling Elders continue to this day to subscribe the formula of 1694,

¹ *Acts of Assembly, ut sup.* p. 294, Sess. 16, February 17, 1700, *ante meridiem*.—Act anent subscribing the Confession of Faith.

² *Ibid.* p. 327, Sess. 10, March 27, 1704, *post meridiem*.—Act anent Commissioners to the General Assembly, and their subscribing the Confession of Faith.

³ See *Postscriptum* to this Lecture.

and require to produce documentary evidence that they have done so before they can claim to sit and vote in the General Assembly.

But, at its own instance and without application to Parliament, a change of formula was made by the Church of Scotland as early as 1711. Before May of that year two things had taken place which troubled and alarmed presbyterian Scotland. (1) The overthrow of the whig Government and the coming into power of the tory party placed the High Church influence in the ascendant. (2) The House of Lords had reversed the decision of the Court of Session in the case of James Greenshields, an Episcopalian who had been lodged in jail for opening a place of worship in Edinburgh and conducting in it the service of the Church of England. In these circumstances the Church of Scotland hastened to guard more stringently admission to the ranks of her ministry. With the illustrious William Carstares in the Moderator's Chair, the Assembly of 1711 prescribed a six years' curriculum of theological study in the case of all expectants or candidates for the ministry, recommended all Presbyteries when taking any one upon trials for licence to 'take trial of his orthodoxy, knowledge in divinity, particularly the modern controversies, and other necessary qualifications for the ministry, and what sense and impressions he has of religion upon his own soul.' Having made this provision for the proper training of students and licensing of probationers the act goes on to say :—' And the General Assembly, judging it fit

that the same method should be followed in all Presbyteries as to the questions put to and engagements taken of probationers when licensed, and ministers when ordained or admitted; and that probationers and ministers should not only give sufficient proof of their piety, literature, and other good qualifications for the ministry, but also come under engagements to adhere to the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of this Church, do therefore enact and appoint that the following Questions be put to all such as pass trials in order to be licensed, as also to such as be ordained ministers, or admitted to any ministerial charge or parish, and that they shall subscribe the Formula after set down, before they be licensed, ordained, or admitted respectively. And the General Assembly hereby strictly prohibits and discharges the licensing, ordaining, or admitting of any who shall not give satisfying answers to these questions, and subscribe the Formula hereto subjoined.¹ Following this are two sets of questions, one to be put to probationers and the other to ministers, and a common formula to be subscribed by both. The leading question for probationers regarding the Confession takes this form:— ‘Do you sincerely own and believe the whole doctrine of the Confession of Faith to be the truths of God, contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments; and do you own the whole doctrine

¹ *Acts of Assembly, ut sup.* p. 453, x. May 22, 1711. Act concerning Probationers, and settling Ministers, with Questions to be proposed to and Engagements to be taken of them.

therein contained as the confession of your faith?' The question for ministers takes this slightly altered form :—'Do you sincerely own and believe the whole doctrine contained in the Confession of Faith to be founded upon the Word of God ; and do you acknowledge the same as the confession of your faith ; and will you firmly and constantly adhere thereto, and, to the utmost of your power, assert, maintain, and defend the same?' The Formula, to be subscribed by all, licentiates, ministers at ordination, and ministers at induction is obviously so constructed as to include both sets of questions :—'I, —— do hereby declare, that I do sincerely own and believe the whole doctrine contained in the Confession of Faith . . . to be the truths of God ; and I do own the same as the confession of my faith.'¹

Both in earlier and more recent times the Presbyterian Churches in Scotland have sought to remove difficulties and scruples in reference to the acceptance of the Westminster symbol on these terms, not by legislation, but by granting a certain measure of liberty to depart from the Confessional standard. It has been said that no British Church has ever permitted a member when admitted to office to give his own explanation of phrases or statements in the Confession to which he took exception.² But that is a

¹ *Acts of Assembly, ut sup.* pp. 454-56.

² 'Without legislating on the subject at all, a Church may act on the understanding, tacit or expressed, that her office-bearers are not to be subjected to discipline on account of departure from the confessional standard, provided such departure does not exceed a certain limit, nor affect certain doctrines deemed to be of vital consequence. In some

mistake. For in 1718 the Rev. James Wardlaw, a Marrow man and one of the notable band of twelve who signed the Representation against the Act condemning the *Marrow of Modern Divinity*, was translated from Cruden to the second charge at Dunfermline vacant by the appointment of Ralph Erskine to the first charge. When the Presbytery met for the induction Mr Wardlaw asked to be allowed to renew his subscription to the Formula with an explanation regarding the extent of the Atonement, his view being that of all Marrow divines, that, while the death of Christ is restricted in point of efficiency to the elect, it has a sufficiency for the salvation of all men. His request was granted and his explanation was recorded in the minutes of Presbytery.¹ Twenty years later the same court met at Carnock for the ordination of the Rev. Thomas Gillespie, the father and joint-founder of the Presbytery of Relief. Gillespie was an ultra-Calvinist, and so had no difficulty in accepting Westminster teaching on the branches of Christendom this practical relaxation of discipline has been carried so far that no discipline on account of doctrinal aberration is exercised at all. British Churches of our order have hitherto taken their confessional position too seriously for such licence to be possible. . . . No British Church, so far as we know, has ever resorted to this expedient [permitting an office-bearer when admitted to office to give his own explanation of 'objectionable phrases' in the Confession, *i.e.* of phrases to which he took exception].¹ *Proceedings of the Eighth General Council of the Alliance of Reformed Churches holding the Presbyterian System.* 1904. Report of Sub-Committee of the Eastern Section on the present relation of British Churches to the Westminster Confession of Faith. Appendix, p. 32. Prepared by the Rev. Principal Dykes, D.D., Cambridge.

¹ *Gospel Truth accurately Stated and Illustrated.* By Rev. John Brown of Whitburn, p. 159. *Fraser's Life and Diary of Ebenezer Erskine*, p. 108.

doctrine of Election. He was also a Marrow theologian and so preached God's deed of gift to mankind sinners. But he had studied theology in England under Dr Doddridge the Nonconformist, and thus had been led to form opinions respecting the province of magistracy which prevented him giving an unqualified subscription to the Formula of 1711. He requested to be allowed to sign with an explanation. The court agreed to accept the qualified subscription, and his admission to the benefice and cure of souls was proceeded with.¹

When we turn to the Church of the Secession in the first half of the eighteenth century we find the same state of matters — a stringent formula and occasional relaxation of the stringency.

Shortly after the publication of the *Judicial Testimony* in 1737 the Associate Presbytery framed for their own use a Formula of questions in place of those employed in the Church from which they had seceded. In this new Formula to be used at the ordination of Ministers and Elders, as also at the licensing of young men to preach the Gospel the second question is in these terms:—‘Do you sincerely own and believe the whole doctrine contained in the confession of Faith compiled by the Assembly of Divines who met at Westminster, with Commissioners from the Church of Scotland,—as the said Confession was received and approved by an act of

¹ *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Principles of the Relief Church.* By Dr Gavin Struthers, 1843, pp. 8-9.

Assembly 1647, Session 23 ; and likewise the whole doctrine contained in the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, compiled by the said Westminster Assembly ;—to be founded upon the word of God : And do you acknowledge the said Confession as the Confession of your Faith : And will you, through grace, firmly and constantly adhere to the doctrine of the said Confession and Catechisms,—and, to the utmost of your power, assert, maintain and defend the same ; against all Deistical, Popish, Arian, Socinian, Arminian, Neonomian, Antinomian, and other doctrines, tenets and opinions whatsoever, contrary to or inconsistent with the said Confession and Catechisms ;—and particularly against the many gross and dangerous errors vented and maintained by Messrs Simson and Campbell ; which are specified and condemned in the judicial Act and Testimony emitted by the Associate Presbytery ?' ¹

Before the Secession Church entered upon the readjustment of its formula individual office-bearers asked and obtained leave from their Church courts to accept the Confession with qualification. It was so in the case of the biographer of John Knox. When he appeared for licence before the Anti-Burgher Presbytery of Kelso he objected to accept the Formula unless this was marked in the minutes, 'That by his answers to these questions he is not to

¹ *The Present Truth: A Display of the Secession Testimony.* 1774. Known as 'Gib's Display.' Vol. i. The Ordination-Vows in the secession, ix.-xv.

be understood as giving any judgment upon the question respecting the power of the civil magistrate in religious matters.’¹ The matter went further than that. For when, a few months afterwards, the Edinburgh Presbytery of the Associate Synod met to ordain the future church historian to be minister of the congregation assembling in the Potterrow he refused to accept office unless, not only ‘a marking’ — for such, in secession circles, was the name given to a qualified subscription — was given in the Presbytery records, but, in addition, the qualification was declared in open court and in the course of the ordination service. ‘It was no uncommon thing,’ writes Dr M’Crie’s son and biographer, ‘to grant a marking in the minutes of Presbyteries, but the public expression of reserve was new, and the Presbytery of Edinburgh, not conceiving themselves authorised to introduce the practice, referred the matter to the Synod which met in May 1796.’² The higher court not only granted what was sought, but passed an Act bearing on the ‘marking.’ In this Act ‘The Synod declare, that as the Confession of Faith was at first received by the Church of Scotland with some exception as to the power of the civil magistrate relative to spiritual matters, so the Synod, for the satisfaction of all who desire to know their mind on this subject extend that exception to every-

¹ *The Life of Thomas M’Crie, D.D.* By his Son. 1840. Chap. i. p. 22.

² *Ibid.* p. 24.

thing in that Confession which, taken by itself, seems to allow the punishment of good and peaceable subjects on account of their religious opinions and observances; that they approve of no other way of bringing men into the Church, or retaining them in it, than such as are spiritual, and were used by the apostles and other ministers of the Word in the first ages of the Christian Church; persuasion, not force; the power of the Gospel, not the sword of the civil magistrate.¹

The other and smaller section of the Secession, constituting the Associate or Burgher Synod, commenced the work of formula readjustment earlier and carried it further than the brethren from whom they separated at the Breach in 1747. For in 1781 one of the four questions of the original Secession Formula which they abbreviated was the second. The alteration was not such as materially to affect the meaning, but consisted in leaving out some phrases hitherto in use.² But in 1797 the Burgher Synod took an important step, which other Churches have not been slow to follow. To the abridged Formula they prefixed a declaration to be read before the questions were put, and which came to be known in secession circles as *The Preamble*. The

¹ *Ibid.* Chap. i. pp. 24, 60 *et seq.* For a statement of the complete change of view on the part of Dr Thomas M'Crie see *The Divisions and Re-Unions of the Church of Scotland*. By C. G. M'Crie, D.D. 1901. Chap. iii. Secession, pp. 80 *et seq.*

² *History of the Secession Church*. By Rev. J. M'Kerrow. Chap. xvi. p. 562.

part of this explanatory statement which bears upon the Confession is the first and is in these terms :— ‘Whereas some parts of the Standard-books of this Synod have been interpreted as favouring compulsory measures in religion, the Synod hereby declare that they do not require any approbation of any such principle from any candidate for licence or ordination.’¹

Although the Church of Relief was formed in 1761 it was not until a Theological Hall was instituted in 1823 that a Formula of questions to be put at ordinations and inductions was drawn up by that denomination. In this scheme of questions the second relates to the Confession and is thus worded :— ‘Do you own, and will you adhere to the doctrine of the Westminster Confession of Faith as founded on and consistent with the Word of God, except in so far as said Confession recognises the power of the civil magistrate to interfere in religious concerns?’²

¹ *History of the Secession Church.* Chap. xvi. p. 591.

² ‘The Westminster Confession of Faith is the standard book adopted by the synod, as expressive of the sense in which they understand the doctrines of the Bible. The most of Presbyterian denominations have a *formula* appended to the Confession, either with the view of rendering it more stringent, as to every word and argument which it contains ; or of giving some part of it a twist, or of relaxing it, so that he who signs it is not bound as to those portions of it by his signature. The Relief Church keep to the simple mode in which the Confession was at first received in Scotland, acknowledging, without duplicity, “the truth of its matter.” . . . In the digest as circulated by the committee, the question to be put to a minister or elder at his ordination . . . was as follows :—“Do you own and believe the doctrine of the Westminster Confession of Faith, to be founded on, and consistent with, the word of God, *except in the particulars specified by the Relief Church.*” This language was considered as giving forth an uncertain sound, unless the

The legislative abolition of the clause in the Burgess Oath which had occasioned the Breach resulted in the re-union of the two main branches of the Secession in 1820, when there was formed *The United Secession Synod of the Secession Church*; and that union paved the way for the larger one of the United Secession and the Relief Churches in 1847, under the name of the *United Presbyterian Church*. In both cases there was a readjustment of relation to the Westminster Confession as a bond of agreement and adhesion. In the earlier union the second Article in the Basis of Union declared, 'We retain the Westminster Confession of Faith, with the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, as the confession of our faith, expressive of the sense in which we understand the Holy Scriptures, it being always understood, however, that we do not approve or require an approbation of anything in those books, or in any other, which teaches, or may be thought to teach, compulsory or persecuting and intolerant principles of religion.'¹ Shortly after the Union was consummated a new Formula of questions was adopted by the United Synod, with this for the second in order:—'Do you acknowledge the Westminster Confession of Faith, with the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, as the Confession of your faith,

particulars were at the same time specified. . . . After much reasoning how to construct a phrase so as to embody this sentiment [that the magistrate has nothing to do with religion in his official capacity] it was suggested that it might be cast into the form 'to be found in the text. *History of the Relief Church*. By Dr Struthers, pp. 437-38.

¹ M'Kerrow's *History of the Secession*. Chap. xix. p. 656.

expressive of the sense in which you understand the Scriptures ; and do you resolve, through Divine grace, firmly and constantly to adhere to the doctrine contained in the said Confession and Catechism, and to assert and defend it to the utmost of your power against all contrary errors ; it being always understood that you are not required to approve of anything in these books which teaches, or may be supposed to teach, compulsory or persecuting and intolerant principles in religion ?' ¹

When the later and larger Union of 1847 took place the article in the Basis of Union and the question in the Formula bearing upon the Westminster standards were in substantial agreement with those of 1820. The second article of the basis is to the effect, 'That the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms are the confession and catechisms of this Church, and contain the authorized exhibition of the sense in which we understand the Holy Scriptures ; it being always understood that we do not approve of anything in these documents which teaches, or may be supposed to teach, compulsory or persecuting and intolerant principles in religion.' ²

In the Formulas for Preachers at Licence and for Ministers, Missionaries and Elders at Ordination the second question is substantially the same, being in

¹ *Proceedings of Second General Council of the Presbyterian Alliance.* 1880. Appendix, p. 1019.

² *Subordinate Standards of the United Presbyterian Church,* 1897 p. 94.

these words:—‘Do you acknowledge the Westminster Confession of Faith, and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, as an exhibition of the sense in which you understand the Holy Scriptures; it being understood that you are not required to approve of anything in these documents which teaches, or is supposed to teach, compulsory or persecuting and intolerant principles in religion?’¹

Three years after her separation from the State the Free Church of Scotland readjusted the Questions and Formula to be used on occasion of licensing, ordaining and inducting services.² In the amended series of questions there is a difference in point of fulness between the second question as put to Elders and Deacons and as put to Probationers at licence and before ordination respectively. By the Act of 1846 Elders and Deacons were simply asked:—‘Do you sincerely own and declare the Confession of Faith, approved by former General Assemblies of this Church, to be the Confession of your faith; and do you own the doctrine therein contained to be the true doctrine, which you will constantly adhere to?’ From Probationers before licence the Act required an affirmative answer to the question:—‘Do you sincerely own and believe the whole doctrine of the Confession of Faith,

¹ *Proceedings, ut sup.* pp. 1001-02.

² *Act anent Questions and Formula.* Sess. 24, 1st June 1846. Printed, along with Questions and Formula, at close of *The Subordinate Standards and other authoritative Documents of the Free Church of Scotland*, 1857, pp. 468-70.

approved by the General Assemblies of this Church, to be the truths of God, contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments ; and do you own the whole doctrine therein contained as the confession of your faith ? ’

At a ministerial ordination or induction service the question of 1846 assumed this amplified form :—‘ Do you sincerely own and believe the whole doctrine contained in the Confession of Faith, approved by former General Assemblies of this Church, to be founded upon the Word of God ; and do you acknowledge the same as the confession of your faith ; and will you firmly and constantly adhere thereto, and to the utmost of your power assert, maintain, and defend the same, and the purity of worship as presently practised in this Church ? ’ That the questions were regarded by the Church of 1846 as substantially the same appears from the fact that only one Formula for subscription was supplied for Probationers and Office-bearers, the opening declaration of which was to this effect :—‘ I, —— do hereby declare, that I do sincerely own and believe the whole doctrine contained in the Confession of Faith, approved by former General Assemblies of this Church, to be the truths of God ; and I do own the same as the confession of my faith.’ One notable feature of this readjustment of her relation to the Westminster symbol on the part of the Church of the Disruption is a declaration in the Act ordaining the questions to be used and the Formula to be subscribed : It is in these terms :—‘ And the

General Assembly, in passing this Act, think it right to declare, that, while the Church firmly maintains the same scriptural principles as to the duties of nations and their rulers in reference to true religion and the Church of Christ, for which she has hitherto contended, she disclaims intolerant or persecuting principles, and does not regard her Confession of Faith, or any portion thereof, when fairly interpreted, as favouring intolerance or persecution, or consider that her office-bearers, by subscribing it, profess any principles inconsistent with liberty of conscience and the right of private judgment.' That the Westminster symbol ought not to be charged with inculcating intolerance or favouring persecution is a view in support of which high authority can be adduced. The Vindicator of the Covenanters led an elaborate argument the object of which was to clear the Confession of the stigma;¹ and Principal William Cunningham, who was largely responsible for the Act under consideration, followed in the same line of defence in a pamphlet published immediately before the Disruption.² But the combined arguments of the historian and the theologian have not silenced opposi-

¹ *Two Discourses on the Unity of the Church, Her Divisions, and their Removal.* To which is subjoined a short view of the plan of religious reformation originally adopted in the Secession. By Dr Thomas M'Crie. 1821.

² *Remarks on the Twenty-third Chapter of the Confession of Faith as bearing on Existing Controversies.* The substance of the pamphlet was re-published in the volume, *Discussions on Church Principles*, 1863, Chap. viii. The Westminster Confession on the relation between Church and State.

tion to this view as can be gathered from the more recent publications of controversialists.¹ Whatever side may be taken in this controversy the course adopted in the Act of 1846 seems to be of doubtful expediency and propriety. To make an *ex cathedra* pronouncement pointing to the alleged *animus imponentis* was certainly a novel procedure. It had too much the appearance of requiring that those who answered the new questions and subscribed the new formula should also accept an interpretation of certain statements which, to say the least, is open to question.

Subsequent to 1846 the Church of the Disruption made one small but important alteration in her relation to the Westminster Confession when used as a bond of agreement and adherence—she relieved her Deacons from subscribing the symbol. In 1884 a majority of Presbyteries consented to a change in the questions to be put to these office-bearers before ordination and in the formula to be subscribed by them at the time of their admission. From 1884 to 1900 the question put to Deacons regarding the confessional theology of the Church was to this effect :—‘Do you sincerely own and receive, as in accordance with Holy Scripture, the system of Evangelical Truth taught in this Church, and set forth in the Westminster Shorter Catechism?’ and the portion of the Formula bearing

¹ *Historical Notices of the Ecclesiastical Divisions in Scotland with Suggestions for Re-union.* By Dr B. Laing. 1852.

The Principles of the Westminster Standards persecuting. By William Marshall, D.D. 1873.

upon the matter was in exactly the same declaratory terms.¹

The last of the Presbyterian Churches of Scotland to enter the field of readjustment and to deal with the Westminster symbol as a bond of agreement and adherence manifested through formula-subscription was the Church of State connection and recognition. For 178 years matters continued in the National Church on the lines laid down in 1711, described in an earlier stage of this lecture. But in 1889 an overture originated in the historically famous Presbytery of Auchterarder, which received the able advocacy of Principal John Cunningham, Professor A. F. Mitchell, and Dr Gloag, was approved of by a majority of Presbyteries, and became a standing law of the Church. The enacting part of this new legislation is extremely interesting. 'Whereas,' it declares, 'it is expedient that the formulas in use in this Church should be so revised and amended that, while affording security on the part of all who subscribe them for their adherence to the true Reformed religion heretofore received in this realm and to the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of this Church, they should at the same time be in accordance with statute law, and so expressed as not to present any unnecessary impediment to the acceptance of office by duly qualified persons. . . . For these causes the General Assembly enact and ordain that ministers at

¹ *Acts of the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland, 1884.* Act I. i. Free Church Blue Book for 1884, pp. 64-69.

their ordination and licentiates when receiving licence shall subscribe to the Confession of Faith as required by Act of Parliament 1693 in terms of the formula hereinafter prescribed. And further the General Assembly enact and ordain that all elders at the time of their ordination, in accordance with the Act of Assembly 1690, shall subscribe their approbation of the Confession of Faith and Presbyterian Government of the Church in terms of the formula hereinafter prescribed for them; and further that the questions hereinafter prescribed, and none other, shall be put respectively to ministers before ordination, to probationers before licence, and to elders before ordination. The General Assembly, while desiring by these changes to enlarge rather than curtail any liberty heretofore enjoyed, and to relieve subscribers from unnecessary burdens as to forms of expression and matters which do not enter into the substance of the faith, declare, at the same time, the adherence of the Church to the Confession of Faith, as its public and avowed Confession, and containing the sum and substance of the doctrine of the Reformed Churches.¹ The second question provided by the Act of 1889 for ministers, probationers, and elders is the abbreviated one:—‘Do you declare the Confession of Faith of this Church to be the Confession of your faith?’ and the formula for ministers and licentiates opens with the affirmation:—‘I declare the Confession of Faith, approved by former General Assemblies of this Church, and ratified

¹ *Acts of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, 1889, Act 17.*

by law in the year 1690, to be the confession of my faith, and I own the doctrine therein contained to be the true doctrine which I will constantly adhere to.'¹

Thus limiting her alterations to questions of acceptance and formula of adherence the National Church might be supposed to have confined herself within safe lines, to have legislated on matters within her province or jurisdiction. But ten years later the Presbytery with which the change originated suggested that the alteration was wrongly based because it proceeded upon an Act of Parliament which had been modified and virtually repealed. When the matter came by overture before the Assembly of 1900 it was deemed of such importance as to justify the appointment of a committee to consider and report upon the powers which the Church possesses of modifying or re-adjusting the terms of adherence to the Confession of Faith. Unable to agree among themselves the Committee laid a memorial before three eminent members of the Scottish bar.² Asked to say whether the provisions of the Parliamentary Act of 1693 had been abrogated or were still binding, Counsel replied that in their opinion these provisions had not been abrogated, but were still binding upon the Church. There was disappointment among members of committee when this opinion was laid before them, and there was dissatisfaction in the General Assembly

¹ *Digest of Laws and Decisions relating to the Church of Scotland.* By Dr William Mair. Third edition, p. 532.

² A. Asher, K.C., Dean of Faculty, Professor John Rankine, K.C., Mr A. H. Briggs Constable.

when the report submitted intimated general concurrence in the lawyers' view of the powers of the Church *quoad* the formula for ministers. The dissatisfaction resulted in the appointment of another and enlarged committee with greater powers, to consider the whole powers of the Church with regard to the Confession of Faith.¹ This widening of the field deepened interest in ecclesiastical proceedings, so that the liveliest, if not the greatest debate of the 1901 Assembly was that which took place when the report of the committee on the Confession and the Church's power in regard to it was under discussion.

There had been wide divergence of opinion in the Committee. What was technically the report asserted in substance that while the Church may, by a declaratory act, explain or define more exactly doctrinal points upon which the Confession is ambiguous or silent, she has no power, by declaratory statement or otherwise, to modify, abridge, or extend any article of the Confession, so long as the Act of 1690 remains in force.² A section of the committee, however, styled in the report 'the first dissenters,' asserted that, while the Church, acting by herself, has no power to modify, abridge, or

¹ *Reports on the Schemes of the Church of Scotland*, 1900, pp. 1209-11.

² *Ibid.* 1901, p. 1056. 'This practically re-affirmed the conclusions arrived at under Sir John Cheyne's convenership—that nothing in the way of relief is possible except by parliamentary legislation. A Declaratory Act is only competent to define or explain points on which the Confession is ambiguous or altogether silent; beyond this range, the Civil Courts would hold such Act to be *ultra vires*.' *The Layman's Book of the General Assembly of 1901*, p. 110.

extend the contents of the Confession, she has, in virtue of her state-recognised jurisdiction, the fullest power of interpreting the Confession when acting in a judicial capacity and of defining or explaining doctrines on points regarding which the Confession is ambiguous or silent.¹ A third party, known as 'the second dissenters,' contended for the spiritual independence, or, as they preferred to call it, the autonomy of the Church under her statutory constitution.² All these views, styled respectively administration, interpretation, and adaptation,³ were advocated with ability and learning on the floor of the House. In the course of the debate there was some plain speaking and there was a good deal of hard hitting. The supporters of the administrative or judicial view were twitted with being frank and bold Erastians.⁴ They retorted that those who claimed for the Church

¹ *Reports on the Schemes of the Church of Scotland*, 1901, p. 1071. 'A first body of dissenters emphasised the fact that the Church can interpret the Confession when any case is judicially brought under review.' *Layman's Book*, p. 110.

² *Ibid.* 1091, p. 1090. 'The second body of dissenters reported that the Church possesses the intrinsic power to determine controversies of faith and to relieve conscientious scruples by proper regulations, as such controversies either have in the past arisen (e.g. in Macleod Campbell's case), or may arise in the future.' *Layman's Book*, pp. 110-11.

³ By Prof. H. M. B. Reid, D.D., Editor of *Layman's Book*, p. 111.

⁴ 'The whole tendency of the arguments on the other side was that the Church had no spiritual power except that given to it and guaranteed to it by the Confession of Faith. Dr Mair's speech was the frankest and boldest Erastianism he ever heard. It might not be Erastianism in the scientific sense of the word, but they all knew what was meant in Scotland by calling a man an Erastian, and he applied that term in its fullest sense to his reverend friend Dr Mair.' Principal Story in reply speech, *Layman's Book*, p. 130.

autonomy were raising the cry of spiritual independence—‘an old friend and an ill-fated cry,’ and it would be well to remember what came of it when last raised in the Church of Scotland.¹ One speaker avowed that many office-bearers had serious difficulties not merely as to accidental statements in the Confession, but also about the essential principles of Calvinistic theology;² while another scouted the idea of the Church of Scotland, or any other Church in Christendom living and flourishing during the next hundred years upon ‘the bald Calvinism of the Westminster Confession,’ and, availing himself of a famous *obiter dictum* of an English Prelate, closed the debate by affirming that he ‘would rather see the Church of Scotland free than the Church of Scotland

¹ The last paragraph in their [the second dissenters'] report showed that it was Spiritual Independence that had been all through in the minds of those who dissented from them. That phrase was an old friend and an ill-fated cry. He refused to discuss it. If they began to do that, it might take them as long as it did their forefathers, and their conclusion was no encouragement to them to proceed with it. He humbly thought that those dissentients might have been warned by what came of the former cry for Spiritual Independence.’ Dr Mair, *Layman's Book*, p. 124.

² ‘The difficulty with the Confession was not that they were in difficulty as to some less important matters in it. The fact was that many of them not only said there were difficulties as to what might be called accidental statements in the Confession, but they had also serious difficulties with the essential principles of the Calvinistic theology. How many ministers believed in the doctrine of election—election to privilege, not service? How many believed in predestination, without regard to conduct or character? How many preached the doctrine of irresistible grace? These were not accidentals; they were the essential principles of Calvinistic theology, and he would like to know how fully they were taught in the Churches of the land.’ Dr Glasse (Edinburgh). *Layman's Book*, p. 128.

tied and bound for all time to come with the fetters of Calvinism.' ¹

The judgment which the House finally came to was a combination of two motions. To the summary motion of the party who favoured simple administration—'Receive the Report, thank the committee for their diligence and discharge them'—there was added what the party of adaptation styled 'the expression of a sympathetic and gentle spirit.' The addendum was couched in these terms: 'In resolving, in the meantime, to proceed no further in the matter, the General Assembly refer to their Act on Subscription of Office-bearers in the Church (1889) in which they declared their desire by the changes then enacted to enlarge rather than curtail any liberty heretofore enjoyed and to relieve subscribers from unnecessary burdens as to forms of expression and matters which do not enter into substance of the faith.' The General Assembly renew this declaration; and, recognising that the complete and exclusive jurisdiction in all causes concerning the faith which is inherent in the Church of Christ has been ratified and guaranteed to the Church of Scotland by National Statutes, and

¹ 'If any man expected the Church of Scotland or any other Church in Christendom to live and flourish during the next hundred years upon the bald Calvinism of the Westminster Confession he was, if he read the signs of the times aright, most terribly mistaken. The Church would be rent asunder if they tried too long to crush the expression of its vitality. The Bishop of Peterborough once said that he would rather see the Church of England free than sober. He would rather see the Church of Scotland free than the Church of Scotland tied and bound for all time to come with the fetters of Calvinism.' Principal Story, *Layman's Book*, p. 131.

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that the Church's ultimate authority in all such matters are Holy Scripture and the Holy Spirit, the General Assembly are confident that the Office-bearers in the Church will so exercise its jurisdiction as not to oppress the consciences of any who, while owning the sum and substance of the doctrine of the Reformed Churches, are not certain as to some less important determinations also contained in it.'¹

Whatever satisfaction this declaration may have given at the time was not of long continuance, for in 1903 the matter of the Confession of Faith and the formula of subscription was once more discussed by the General Assembly. On this occasion the assault on Confessional theology was more determined than on the previous one. In the course of debate the account of the creation of the world and of man, of the Fall and of human corruption was pronounced to be 'wholly unsatisfactory'; the doctrine of the Divine decree and Divine Providence was denounced as false; the teaching on the perseverance of the saints was

¹ *Reports on the Schemes of the Church of Scotland*, 1901, pp. 1092-93. We subjoin the figures of the voting upon this important occasion. For

Dr Mair's Motion with Dr Scott's Addendum	156
For Dr Story's Motion, That the document called 'Second Dissent' be adopted by the Assembly as containing the answer to the remit from last Assembly	117
For Dr Glasse's Motion, That the subject be remitted to the Committee for further consideration, with instructions to report to next Assembly	20
On a final division there voted—	
For the Motion of Drs Mair and Scott	178
„ Dr Story	146
Majority for combined Motions of Drs Mair and Scott,	32

charged with being 'misleading, fruitful of self-confidence and self-satisfaction, and relaxing to all noble moral effort on the part of man.' Even the doctrine of the Atonement as worked out in the Confession of Westminster was rejected with contumely as 'the revelation of a legal system, an ignominious plan whereby Divine justice is satisfied and some escape from the burden and punishment of their sin, instead of being for all the manifestation of the Divine love in which lay men's salvation, the revelation of a love which lifted man up to the height of its own purity.'¹ The teaching of the Confession on the subject of the text of Scripture was declared to be such 'that no professor of Biblical Criticism, no educated man, could accept.'²

To the question, What ought the General Assembly to do in view of the revolt from the subordinate standard thus avowed, various replies were given. One proposal was to pass a Declaratory Act, but to that it was replied, on high legal authority, that any such enactment would be worth nothing. The Church of Scotland, as the Church of the State, had no power,

¹ Principal Story's speech on The Formula of Subscription. *The Layman's Book of the General Assembly of 1903*, pp. 136-40.

² Prof. Herkless (St Andrews), seconding Principal Story's Motion: 'In requiring subscription to the formula legalised by Act of the Scots Parliament, 1693, the General Assembly does now expressly declare that the Confession of Faith is to be regarded not as an infallible creed imposed on the consciences of men, but as a system of doctrine valid only in so far as it accords with Holy Scripture, interpreted under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.' *Layman's Handbook*, p. 140. This motion was withdrawn in favour of that of Dr Scott, which became the finding of the Assembly and is given in the text.

unless it was prepared to break its bargain with the State, and to give up State connection, to make such a Declaratory Act as their friends 'over the way' had done some years ago.¹ Another suggestion counselled an approach to the legislature for relief from the present ambiguous and suspicious position. Better, it was said, disestablishment than dishonesty—the only honourable course was an appeal to Parliament.² The conviction that going to the State was not opportune and that any action of that kind would be opposed alike by Churchmen and Dissenters, by parliamentary friends and political opponents prevented this proposal receiving any considerable support, and led the Assembly to content themselves with adding another declaration to those of 1889 and 1901. The important part of the motion adopted by the Assembly of 1903 is in these terms:—'Finding that ambiguity exists as to the authority of the Confession of Faith, to which all office-bearers in the

¹ The Procurator (Sir John Cheyne, K.C.). 'It was quite true that it was within their power to make any change on the Confession of Faith, but it would be utterly useless. They might pass as many Declaratory Acts as they pleased, but they were really worth nothing.' *Layman's Handbook*, p. 144.

² Principal Stewart (St Andrews), who moved that the General Assembly should remit the matter to a Committee to consider whether an approach should not be made to the legislature in connection with the Confession of Faith and Formula, and what form such an appeal should take. 'There were many ways of reconciling the Confession to their consciences, but the method of doing so was in many cases too subtle, and inappreciable by 'the man in the street,' who said, 'You have signed a thing you don't believe; you are not an honest man.' This state of affairs was not satisfactory.' *The Layman's Book*, pp. 144-45.

Church are required to subscribe according to the formula prescribed by Act of Parliament, 1693, the General Assembly . . . hereby declare that the Confession of Faith is to be regarded as an infallible rule of faith and worship only in so far as it accords with Holy Scripture, interpreted by the Holy Spirit. The General Assembly reaffirm their declaration in 1889, and their deliverance upon the report of the Committee on the Powers of the Church, 1901, and instruct that these be read along with this Declaration to all office-bearers in the Church when called to sign the formula legalised by Act of Parliament, 1693.’¹

Such is the position of matters in the National Church as regards the Confession viewed as a bond of agreement and adherence to the Formula of subscription to the same. It is a position which it is safe to say no one regards as satisfactory or final.

POSTSCRIPTUM.—Since the above was written the Church of Scotland has taken action upon the lines

¹ Dr Mair's *Digest, ut sup.* pp. 531-32. *The Layman's Book, ut sup.* p. 143. In his 'editorial sketch,' of the debate of 1903 Professor Reid of Glasgow University makes the following remarks:—'This year's debate was after all of a perfunctory character, and plainly foreshadowed the compromise which has actually been adopted. . . . Prof. Paterson naïvely explained his own mode of meeting the scruples of students. . . . The theory is obviously open to grotesque consequences. . . . This Declaratory Act (for so it may be called) was not adopted unanimously, in spite of the coalition. . . . For another year this grave question rests. The situation is materially lightened. It may be said that the Church of Scotland is now in possession of a Declaration giving greater freedom than any enjoyed elsewhere. The legal question at issue is, of course, untouched.' *The Layman's Book, ut sup.* pp. 128-29.

suggested by Principal Stewart of St Andrews in the Assembly of 1903. She has appealed to the legislature for relief from the unsafe and unsatisfactory position in which she then was. On the 26th May, 1905, when the Report of the Church Interests Committee was before the House it was moved, seconded, and, after lengthened discussion, unanimously resolved that, 'The General Assembly cordially approve of the course followed by the Committee with reference to the Formula of Subscription with the consent of the majority of the Presbyteries thereof. The formula at present in use in any case shall be required until a formula in lieu thereof is prescribed.'

This deliverance having been moved for as a parliamentary paper, was printed and ordered by His Majesty to be presented to both Houses of Parliament.

The result has been that in an Act of Parliament, called the Churches (Scotland) Act, 1905, 'to provide for the Settlement of certain Questions between the Free Church and the United Free Church in Scotland, and to make certain amendments of the law with respect to the Church of Scotland,' the fifth section is in these terms: 'The formula of subscription to the Confession of Faith required from ministers and preachers of the Church of Scotland as by law established and from persons appointed to Chairs of Theology in the Scottish Universities and the Principal of Saint Mary's College, Saint Andrews, respectively, shall be such as may be prescribed by Act of the General Assembly of the said Church with the consent

of the majority of the Presbyteries thereof. The formula at present in use in any case shall be required until a formula in lieu thereof is so prescribed.'¹

It will fall to some future historian or lecturer to narrate the action of the legal Church of Scotland when she proceeds to exercise the right thus acknowledged by, or conferred upon her by the State.

¹ For the complication of ecclesiastical affairs in Scotland calling for a Royal Commission and the Churches (Scotland) Act, with relative documents see an admirable *Manual of the Church Question in Scotland*, edited by Hew Morrison, J.P., LL.D. Edinburgh : Keith & Co. 1905

LECTURE VI.

RECONSTRUCTION OF THE CONFESSIONAL THEOLOGY OF SCOTLAND SUBSEQUENT TO 1647.

IN previous lectures evidence has been adduced to prove that the Church of Scotland has never regarded any of her symbols as final and permanent. At no time has she claimed immutability for her present beliefs and present attainments in Divine knowledge, and never has she claimed infallibility for the articles in which she has exhibited these beliefs and attainments. On the contrary, as has been pointed out, all the Presbyterian Churches in Scotland have asserted and exercised the right to change one symbol for another, and they have repeatedly readjusted their relation to subordinate standards used as bonds of fellowship and union by altering and qualifying their formulas of questions and of subscription. More than this, however, has to be said.

Among the Reformed Churches holding the Westminster Standards theologians of caution and conservative tendency have asserted the right of the Church of Christ, in the exercise of 'intrinsic power received from Christ,' to 'revise, to purge, and to add to' any Confession she has constructed or accepted.¹

¹ Rev. William Wilson, D.D., Moderator of the Free Church of Scotland, 1866. *Proceedings and Debates of General Assembly*. Open-

In the United States of America reconstruction of confessional theology has been carried out on the first two of these lines, the lines of revising and purging. When some of the Puritans of England and of the Presbyterians of Scotland and the North of Ireland crossed the Atlantic they took with them the Westminster Standards and planted them in the virgin soil of America. When the War and the Declaration of Independence brought about a new relation between Church and Commonwealth certain alterations of the Confession were determined upon. The new Version of the symbol, published in 1788, omitted a clause in the Chapter 'Of Christian Liberty, and Liberty of Conscience' which provides for those who 'oppose any lawful power, or the lawful exercise of it, whether it be civil or ecclesiastical' being proceeded against, not only 'by the censures of the Church,' but also '*by the power of the civil magistrate.*'¹ It altered the Chapter which treats 'Of the Civil Magistrate' by omitting what is said about that functionary having 'authority' and it being 'his duty to take order, that unity and peace be preserved in the Church; that the truth of God be kept pure and entire; that all blasphemies and heresies be suppressed, all corruptions and abuses in worship and discipline prevented,

ing Address, p. 7. The portions of the Address bearing upon the right of non-established Churches to change their confession are quoted by Mr Taylor Innes in his *Law of Creeds in Scotland*, chap. vii. 'The position assumed by non-established Churches in Scotland in reference to their Creeds,' § 3.

¹ Chap. XX. iv.

or reformed, and all the ordinances of God duly settled, administered, and observed,'¹ and by substituting a paragraph which affirms that, 'as nursing fathers, it is the duty of civil magistrates to protect the Church of our common Lord, without giving the preference to any denomination of Christians above the rest,' that 'as Jesus Christ hath appointed a regular government and discipline in His Church, no law of any Commonwealth should interfere with, let, or hinder the due exercise thereof among the voluntary members of any denomination of Christians, according to their own profession and belief,' and that 'it is the duty of civil magistrates to protect the person and good name of all their people, in such an effectual manner as that no person be suffered, either upon pretence of religion or infidelity, to offer any indignity, violence, abuse, or injury to any other person whatsoever; and to take order that all religious and ecclesiastical assemblies be held without molestation or disturbance.'² Finally, the American revision of 1788 abbreviated the chapter devoted to Synods and Councils, striking out the article which begins with the statement, 'As magistrates may lawfully call a synod of ministers, and other fit persons, to consult and advise with, about matters of religion.'³

In the Cumberland Country of Kentucky and

¹ Chap. XXII. iii.

² Schaff's *Creeds*, vol. i. chap. vii. sec. vii. § 98. 'The Westminster Standards in America,' pp. 807-8.

³ Chap. XXXI. ii.

Tennessee there was organised in 1810 the Cumberland Presbytery, the ecclesiastical outcome of an extensive revival among a population of Scoto-Irish extraction. In the course of years the Presbytery grew into a Synod, and the Synod into an Assembly. The Cumberland Synod framed a new version of the Westminster Confession, which was revised in 1829, in 1883, and finally in 1901.¹ In its finally adopted form the Confession of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church differs considerably from that of Westminster in respect of the order and headings of the chapters and the contents of the several articles, which are numbered continuously throughout the symbol instead of being grouped under the successive chapters. As the theology of the Cumberland Church is of Arminian or semi-Arminian type the revision is most drastic in those portions of the old symbol which are distinctively Augustinian or Calvinistic in their teaching. Thus what in the Confession of Westminster is treated of under the head of 'Effectual Calling' appears in the Cumberland revision under that of 'Regeneration'; the opening sentence of the original, 'All those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only, He is pleased effectually to call,' gives place to, 'Those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ are regenerated, or born from above, renewed in spirit, and made new creatures in Christ'; and the much controverted statement about 'elect infants, dying in

¹ *Revised Confession of Faith and Catechism of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church.* Nashville, Tenn. U.S.A.

infancy' being 'regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit, . . . as also all other elect persons who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the Word,' is displaced by the unambiguous pronouncement, 'All infants, dying in infancy, and all persons who have never had the faculty of reason, are regenerated and saved.' Naturally the chapter on 'God's Eternal Decree' is completely recast. Under the head 'Decrees of God' two brief articles take the place of the lengthy eight in the seventeenth-century document; all mention of the elect, of predestination, foreordination and preterition is carefully eliminated, and the definition of the Divine Decrees is reduced to this, 'God, for the manifestation of His glory and goodness, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely and unchangeably ordained or determined what He Himself would do; what He would require His intelligent creatures to do; and what should be the rewards respectively of the obedient and disobedient.'¹

The most recent revision of the Westminster Confession was undertaken some years ago by the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America and was completed in 1903.² In this Revised Version of

¹ For Cumberland Revisions of the Westminster symbol see Schaff's *Creeeds*, vol. i. pp. 813-16. Vol. iii. 771-76.

For an exhaustive catalogue of the issues of the Cumberland Confession of Faith (1814-1901) see article by Prof. B. B. Warfield in *Presbyterian and Reformed Review* for July, 1902. 'The Pointing of the Westminster Confession, iv. Notes towards a Bibliography of the Modifications,' pp. 409-26.

² *The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of*

the Westminster symbol there are explanations of the text, additions to the text, and alterations in the text.

(1) The explanations are given in a Declaratory Statement. The first section of the statement explains the position of the American Church regarding the doctrine of the Divine Decree. In order to explicate that doctrine more fully in certain of its aspects supposed to be less fully stated in the Confession it is authoritatively declared as follows:—‘That concerning those who are saved in Christ, the doctrine of God’s eternal decree is held in harmony with the doctrine of His love to all mankind, His gift of His Son to be the propitiation for the sins of the whole world, and His readiness to bestow His saving grace on all who seek it. That concerning those who perish, the doctrine of God’s eternal decree is held in harmony with the doctrine that God desires not the death of any sinner, but has provided in Christ a salvation sufficient for all, adapted to all, and freely offered in the Gospel to all; that men are fully responsible for their treatment of God’s gracious offer; that His decree hinders no man from accepting that offer; and that no man is condemned except on the ground of his sin.’ The second section of the Declaratory Statement expresses the view of the United States’ Church regarding the future of children dying in infancy, and declares that the Con-

America: being its standards subordinate to the Word of God, viz., The Confession of Faith, etc., as ratified and adopted by the Synod of New York and Philadelphia in the year of our Lord 1788 and as amended in the years 1805-1903. Philadelphia. 1904.

fession of Westminster 'is not to be regarded as teaching that any who die in infancy are lost.' 'We believe,' the Statement goes on to declare, 'that all dying in infancy are included in the election of grace, and are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit, who works when, and where, and how He pleases.'¹

(2) The material added to the Confession in the American Revision of 1903 is introduced with a preamble which states that, 'whereas it is desirable to express more fully the doctrine of the Church concerning the Holy Spirit, Missions, and the Love of God for all men, the following chapters are added to the Confession of Faith.'² The new chapters are two in number, and they are placed, not in logical relation to other topics, but at the end of the symbol, where they are numbered xxxiv. and xxxv. respectively. The first of the new chapters is 'Of the Holy Spirit' and consists of four articles of considerable length. The really new matter is in the second article, which contains a full confessional statement of

¹ *The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America*, p. 138b. The two statements are introduced with the following preamble :—'While the ordination vow of ministers, ruling elders, and deacons, as set forth in the Form of Government, requires the reception and adoption of the Confession of Faith only as containing the System of Doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures, nevertheless, seeing that the desire has been formally expressed for a disavowal by the Church of certain inferences drawn from statements in the Confession of Faith, and also for a declaration of certain aspects of revealed truth which appear at the present time to call for more explicit statement, therefore the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America does authoritatively declare as follows :'

² *Ibid.* p. 138.

a doctrine, only incidentally alluded to in the original Confession under the designation of 'common operations of the Spirit,'¹ and known in systematic theology, as the doctrine of Common Grace. The second of the new chapters has for title, 'Of the Love of God, and Missions.' It seems, however, that at an early stage of the revision work the same chapter was designated 'Of the Gospel.'² Possibly Of the External Call, which

¹ Chap. X. iv. 'Others not elected, although they may be called by the ministry of the word, and may have some common operations of the Spirit, yet they never truly come unto Christ, and therefore cannot be saved.' The second article of the American Revision Chapter is in these words:—'He [the Holy Spirit] is the Lord and Giver of life, everywhere present in nature, and is the source of all good thoughts, pure desires and holy counsels in men. By Him the Prophets were moved to speak the Word of God, and all writers of the Holy Scriptures inspired to record infallibly the mind and will of God. The dispensation of the Gospel is especially committed to Him. He prepares the way for it, accompanies it with His persuasive power, and urges its message upon the reason and conscience of men, so that they who reject its merciful offer are not only without excuse, but are also guilty of resisting the Holy Spirit.' *The Constitution, ut sup.* p. 138. Of this section of the American Revision Prof. Warfield has the following criticism and appreciation:—'The second sentence, which is out of its logical place, is only a repetition of doctrine already set forth with fulness and emphasis in the First Chapter of the Confession. But the rest of the section is entirely new to the Confession. The framers of the Confession consecrated to it [the doctrine of Common Grace] no separate section of their work, and indeed nowhere give it even incidental development. The incorporation of a statement of this doctrine into this chapter is, therefore, a real extension of the Confession by a new doctrinal definition; and the doctrine thus inserted is certainly one of large importance, if not to the integrity of the Calvinistic system or to its full statement for the practical ends of the religious life, yet certainly for its thorough elaboration and its complete development as a comprehensive world view.' *The Confession of Faith as Revised in 1903.* Article in *Union Seminary Magazine.* Richmond, Va. Vol. xvi. No. 1, pp. 15-16.

² Prof. B. B. Warfield, *ut sup.* p. 19.

originates in the philanthropy of God and issues in missions, would have been a more felicitous title than either of these. For in the first of the four articles which constitute the added chapter the ground of the External Call or Gospel offer is stated to be the infinite and perfect love of God. In the second the contents of the Call are developed—God's love for the world and His desire that all men should be saved, His promise of eternal life to all who truly repent and believe in Christ, His invitation and command to all to embrace the offered mercy, and His Spirit's pleading with men to accept His gracious invitation. In the third article the implicates of the External Call are set forth, it being the duty and privilege of every hearer of the Gospel to accept its provisions, those continuing in impenitence and unbelief aggravating their guilt and ultimately perishing by their own fault. And in the last article the obligations growing out of the External Call of the Gospel are enumerated, the commission of Christ's Church to go into all the world and to make disciples of all nations, and the duty of all believers to sustain the ordinances of religion, and to contribute by their prayers, gifts, and personal efforts to the extension of the Kingdom of Christ throughout the whole earth.¹

(3) The alterations made upon the text of the document of 1647 by the American Revision of 1903 are the following. From the chapter 'Of Lawful Oaths and Vows' there has been omitted the sentence in

¹ *The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.* p. 138a.

which it is stated that 'it is a sin to refuse an oath touching anything that is good and just, being imposed by lawful authority.'¹ There has been a reconstruction of the section in the chapter 'Of the Church' in which the Pope is described as 'that Antichrist, that man of sin, and son of perdition, that exalteth himself in the Church, against Christ and all that is called God.'² For that strong language there is substituted the statement, 'the claim of any man to be the vicar of Christ and the head of the Church, is unscriptural, without warrant in fact, and is a usurpation dishonouring to the Lord Jesus Christ.'³ And finally, the section of the chapter upon 'Good Works' which treats of the works done by unregenerate men has been remodelled. Of such works the authorised Confession affirms that 'although, for the matter of them, they may be things which God commands, and of good use both to themselves and others, they are sinful, and cannot please God, or make a man meet to receive grace from God.'⁴ As revised, the statement refrains from making the first part of that affirmation and simply asserts that the works of unregenerate men 'come short of what God requires, and do not make any man meet to receive the grace of God.'⁵

What the Churches of America have thus repeatedly done no British Presbyterian Church has

¹ Chap. XXII. iii.

² Chap. XXV. vi.

³ *The Constitution, ut sup.* p. 116.

⁴ Chap. XVI. vii.

⁵ *The Constitution, ut sup.* pp. 78-79.

ever once attempted. While there have been recensions of the Westminster Confession by the Independents and Baptists of England, dating as early as 1648 and coming down to 1890,¹ the Presbyterians of Great Britain have never undertaken to alter the text of the symbol constructed two centuries and a half ago, they have never put forth an ecclesiastical Revised Version of what became their existing Creed in 1647. But while abstaining from engaging in the work of revision or recension the Church of Scotland has, from time to time, reconstructed certain portions of her confessional theology and so enlarged the number of her symbolic documents. The reconstructions made subsequent to the seventeenth century have been of two kinds. There have been declarations quite independent of the Confession of Westminster, having their historical occasion in doctrinal developments of a later date; and there have been declaratory statements or acts the express object of which has been to disavow inferences drawn from statements in the Confession of Faith, or to explicate certain

¹ For the most complete account of these recensions of the Westminster symbol see Prof. Warfield's Article in *Presbyterian and Reformed Review* for July 1902, already referred to, pp. 387-404. Prof. Warfield's list concludes with the following:—'Thirty-two Articles of Christian Faith and Practice: Baptist Confession of Faith, with Scripture Proofs, adopted by the Ministers and Messengers of the General Assembly, which met in London in 1689. With a Preface by the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon, 1890.' 'In effect,' writes the Princeton professor, 'this Confession is nothing other than the Savoy Declaration [1658] somewhat freely interpolated with additional sentences and clauses, and adapted to the use of the Baptists by an adjustment of its doctrine of Baptism.'

doctrines in some aspects considered to be less fully stated in the symbol than is desirable. As the reconstructions of the former kind come, for the most part, first in order of time they fall to be first considered.

I. RECONSTRUCTION OF CONFSSIONAL THEOLOGY INDEPENDENT OF THE WESTMINSTER CONFSSION.

(1) On the 21st of May 1722 the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland passed an 'Act concerning Doctrine.'¹ The Act goes back, in a way of confirming and explaining, upon a deliverance of the Assembly of 1720 condemning the teaching of the *Marrow of Modern Divinity*, and, in a way of censure, upon a Representation in vindication of Marrow teaching which had been laid before the intervening Assembly. The doctrinal declaration is of great length and elaboration. The greater part of it is taken up with a statement, in the words of the Confession and Catechisms of Westminster, of eight propositions which the Assembly declared they owned and maintained to be 'agreeable to the Holy Scripture.' That is followed up by a detailed examination of the Representation of the twelve brethren espousing the defence of Marrow doctrine. And the Act closes with strictly prohibiting and discharging all ministers from using, in any form, either publicly or privately, any of the positions laid down in the Representation, or what may be equivalent to them, or of like tendency.

¹ *Acts of the General Assembly, ut sup.* pp. 548-56.

By this declaratory act the Church of Scotland in the beginning of the eighteenth century committed herself to a school of Calvinism distinct from that of the Westminster divines and having affinity with that of the later theologians of Holland. The Calvinism of the *Marrow*, which the Act of 1722 so sweepingly condemned, was liberal, evangelical, evangelistic; the Calvinism of Moderatism was narrow, and rigid, and cold. In both systems the doctrine of Election found a place; but the former, while confining the actual purchase and application to elect persons, proclaimed a warrant to make universal offer of Christ, and a warrant on the part of all sinners to receive Him who is a 'Common Saviour' and whose salvation is 'a common salvation.' For so doing it was denounced by Calvinists of the type of Principal Hadow of St Andrews, the leader of the anti-Marrow party in the National Church, whom Thomas Boston charged with being 'the spring of the black Act' of 1720, and who was the person responsible for the 'Act concerning Doctrine' in 1722.

(2) Another addition to doctrinal declarations in presbyterian Scotland, subsequent to the Westminster Assembly and having no immediate connection with it, came from a different quarter and was of an entirely opposite character. Exactly twenty years after the Church of Scotland had passed her 'Act concerning Doctrine' there was issued by the Associate Presbytery of Seceders an equally long and elaborate document 'concerning the Doctrine of

Grace.’¹ The Secession manifesto is pervadingly historical, a large number of its sections being devoted to a statement of the injury done to the free grace of God by successive General Assemblies from 1717 to 1722. In addition, however, to the controversial matter which dominates the document there is a considerable amount of positive doctrinal teaching on some of the cardinal articles of the Faith. This holds good specially of the scriptural and confessional truth of the salvation of mankind, or, the Atonement. On this matter the Secession symbol has the bright, warm colouring of the *Marrow*. Appropriating the favourite formula which proclaims Christ to be the Divine deed of gift or grant to mankind sinners, it asserts this gifting or granting to be the foundation of faith; the ground and warrant of the ministerial offer of a full, free and unhampered offer of Christ, His grace, righteousness and salvation to all mankind; and the warrant for all men to receive Him, however great sinners they are or have been.² The Act fear-

¹ *Act of the Associate Presbytery, concerning the DOCTRINE of GRACE*: Wherein the said Doctrine, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures, and agreeably thereto set forth in our Confession of Faith and Catechisms, is asserted; and vindicated from the errors vented and published in some Acts of the Assemblies of this Church, passed in prejudice of the same: With an Introduction, discovering the rise and progress of the opposition to the Doctrine of Grace; and the reasons of passing and publishing this Act, in vindication of the same. Gib's *Display*, vol. i. pp. 171-220.

² ‘The persons to whom this grant and offer is made, are not the elect only, but mankind considered as lost. For the record of God being such a thing as warrants all to believe on the Son of God; it is evident, that it can be no such warrant, to tell men that

lessly avows that the Son of God is the Saviour of the world, in whom mankind lost have a common interest, it being warrantable for all such to take possession of Christ and the whole of His salvation.¹

In thus making the gift of a Saviour mentioned in Scripture a giving by way of offer and not a giving into possession, the Secession divines rejected the tenets, on the one hand, that the free and universal offer of Christ in the Gospel is inconsistent with particular redemption, and, on the other, that God's making a deed of gift unto all mankind infers universal redemption as to purchase.²

It only remains to be noted that in giving forth this doctrinal manifesto in 1742 the Church of the Secession proceeded upon the very same ground as the unbroken Church of Scotland did well nigh a hundred years earlier when she adopted the Confession of West-

God hath given eternal life to the elect. The offering of a gift to a certain select company can never be a warrant for all men to receive or take possession of it.' *Display*, p. 180.

¹ 'The above doctrine concerning the gift of Christ in the word unto mankind sinners is likewise from the holy scriptures asserted in our Confession of Faith (chap. vii. § 3): where it is plain that the offer of life and salvation is unto mankind considered as sinners; and that therefore sinners, as such, have a warrant to believe or receive the unspeakable gift of God.' *Ibid.* pp. 180-81.

² 'The Presbytery hereby reject and condemn the following tenets and opinions (1) That the free, unlimited and universal offer of Christ in the Gospel to sinners of mankind as such is inconsistent with particular redemption: Or that God the Father—his making a deed of gift unto all mankind that whosoever of them all shall believe on his Son shall not perish but have everlasting life—infers an universal atonement or redemption as to purchase. (2) That this grant or offer is made only to the elect, or to such who have previous qualifications commending them above others.'

minster with modifications. In doing this, as has been seen, the undivided Church of the realm asserted her possession of 'intrinsic power received from Christ.' In emitting her 'Act concerning the Doctrine of Grace' the Associate Presbytery made the same claim and acted in virtue of possessing the same Christ-given power. In the Preamble of the Act it is emphatically declared that 'in zeal for the glory of God and the vindication of his truth . . . the Associate Presbytery did and hereby do judge it their duty, according to the powers given them by the Lord Jesus Christ as a judicatory of his house, to assert the truth, from the holy scriptures and our standards of Doctrine, concerning the free grace of God in the salvation of mankind lost; in opposition to the corrupt doctrine vented in some acts of Assemblies, darkening and enervating the same.'¹

(3) By the beginning of the nineteenth century the keenness and bitterness of the Burgess Oath controversy had disappeared, the makers of the Breach of 1747 had dropped out of the ranks of the Church militant, and for their ecclesiastical successors the old distinction between Burgher and anti-Burgher had little meaning and less interest. And so, on the eighth September 1820 the two sections of the Secession met and united, doing so in the same building within the walls of which, seventy-three years earlier, the separation had taken place. Within a week of the formation of *The United Secession Church* there was

¹ *Ibid.* pp. 172-73.

issued 'a short exhibition of the tenets held by the Secession Church, for the information of her members and of those not of her communion.' This *Summary of Principles*,¹ as it was styled, appeared in a considerably altered form in 1855 with the sanction of the United Presbyterian Synod of that year.² A section containing a brief statement of the 'Reasons of Secession' which closed the *Summary* of the Associate Synod disappears from the Summary of the United Presbyterian body, while to the latter document there is prefixed an 'Introductory Historical Sketch,' and there are some variations both in the ordering and the headings of the different sections and in the wording of the sentences. But the two Summaries are substantially the same. In both versions the Calvinism is distinctively evangelical and evangelistic. In that of 1820, under the heading 'Of the application of Redemption' it is affirmed, 'The Salvation obtained by the Son of God is presented, as the gift of Heaven, to all who hear the Gospel'; and in the Reasons of Secession the teaching of the Marrow 'that God in the Gospel makes a gift of the Saviour to mankind sinners, as such, warranting every one who hears the Gospel to believe in Him for salvation' is approved of, and the unqualified condemnation of that teaching by the General Assembly is declared to be nothing

¹ *Summary of Principles agreed upon by the United Associate Synod of the Secession Church, September 14, 1820.*

² *Summary of Principles, with Introductory Historical Sketch.* Approved of, May 1855. *Subordinate Standards of the United Presbyterian Church.* Printed by Authority. 1897.

short of a condemnation of 'some of the most important doctrines of the Gospel; such as the unlimited extent of the Gospel Call, and the free grace of God in the salvation of sinners.'¹ In the later version of 1855 Redemption is treated of under the two headings, How Salvation is procured, and, How it is applied. Under the first of these the leading statement is that 'God, foreseeing the fall of man, in sovereign mercy, from all eternity, purposed to save a portion of the lost race, and formed an arrangement commonly called the Covenant of Grace, whereby sin might be atoned for, salvation freely offered to sinners, and that salvation secured to all who had been the objects of His electing love.' Under the head of How Salvation is applied the Lord Jesus Christ is said to be 'exhibited as the Saviour of sinners: salvation is offered through His all-sufficient atonement, to men without exception; and all are commanded to believe the divine testimony, and accept of the proffered salvation.'²

Both the United Secession and the United Presbyterian Churches made perfectly plain the light in which they regarded the *Summary*, and the use they designed to be made of it. In the case of the earlier Church the Synod of 1820 agreed that it be regarded as a compendious Exhibition of Principles and as a Directory for the admission of Members, who are to be considered as acceding to the principles contained

¹ United Secession *Summary*, pp. 191, 194.

² United Presbyterian *Summary*, pp. 106-7.

in it, 'according to the measure of their knowledge.'¹ The United Presbyterian Church, while careful to declare that 'The Summary is not to be regarded in any respect as an addition to, or as superseding the recognised subordinate standards,' approved of it as fitted to afford, especially to persons seeking admission into the fellowship of the Church, a distinct account of the views of divine truth which it holds.²

In this connection it is significant that when the Associate Synod had completed its *Testimony, historical and doctrinal*, and was called upon to make enactment regarding that document in 1827, they disclaimed all intention to elevate the Testimony to the place of authority occupied by the standards, because they retained 'The Confession of Faith and Catechisms, and the *Summary of Principles* as their Creed, or profession of faith, or Terms of Communion.'³

(4) The only remaining reconstruction of confessional theology subsequent to 1647 and independent of the Westminster Confession has come from that United Presbyterian Church which in 1855 gave its approval to the *Summary of Principles*. In 1881 the Synod gave authoritative sanction to what was designated a *Manual of Distinctive Principles*.⁴ The matters treated of in this manifesto

¹ U.S. *Summary*, p. 189.

² U.P. *Summary*, p. 97.

³ *Testimony of the United Associate Synod, ut sup.* Minute of Synod respecting the Testimony, p. iii.

⁴ *Subordinate Standards of the United Presbyterian Church. Manual of Distinctive Principles.* Approved of May 1881. *Extract from Minute.* 'The Synod agreed to sanction the Manual as a statement of

relate more specially to the Church, its constitution, worship, order, responsibilities, and public relations. Used, as it was designed to be, for the instruction of the young, the *Manual* formed a fitting sequel to the *Summary*, seeing the latter concerned itself chiefly with a presentation of Christian truth and Christian ethics. The only thing in this reconstruction calling for special notice is the advance upon or departure from Westminster teaching regarding the relation between Church and State, between church rule and civil rule. Under the article upon Church Order and Government the authors of the Secession manifesto insert this paragraph, which has in it the ring of some of Andrew Melville's utterances in presence of his earthly sovereign:—'Deriving our authority from Christ in His Word, we therefore refuse all dictation or control by any secular power in the order and government of the Church. We neither lean upon the State for help, nor do we acknowledge its right to interfere in any case with our deliberations and decisions. The provinces of church rule and civil rule, though not opposite, are essentially distinct. Every church is bound to be the trustee and guardian of its own independence. It may not, therefore, yield up any of its rights and liberties to the civil power in exchange for supposed advantages that may be conferred in return. We honour the magistrate

the distinctive principles of this Church, fitted, along with the *Summary of Principles*, to instruct its members, and especially the young, in the same.'

within his own sphere, rendering unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's; we refuse to own his authority when he seeks to intrude within the sphere of the conscience and the Church, because we must render unto God the things which are God's.'¹ When the *Manual* comes to the closing article—that of 'Church and State'—the pronouncement gives forth no uncertain sound as to the autonomy, the exclusive jurisdiction, and the spiritual independence of the former. 'The Church,' it affirms, 'is exclusively the institution of Christ, invariable in its principles and laws; whereas the State is specifically an ordinance of man, varying in its forms and practices, according to his wisdom and changeful policy. . . . The sphere of the magistrate's authority and administration is restricted to civil matters, or matters which concern men in their civil relations. He has no right of control in the things of religion or within the domain of conscience. The means by which his authority is upheld in that sphere are also entirely different from those by which Christ's authority in His Church is upheld. The magistrate maintains his authority by force, whereas Christ's is maintained by truth and love. . . . Therefore to own the magistrate's authority in spiritual things, and his right to employ the national resources for the support of any section of the Church, is to place Cæsar on the throne of Christ.'²

¹ *Subordinate Standards of the United Presbyterian Church*, pp. 8-9. III. Church Order and Government.

² *Ibid.* pp. 15-16.

II. RECONSTRUCTIONS OF CONFSSIONAL THEOLOGY IN TERMS OF THE WESTMINSTER CONFSSION.

The Scottish reconstructions of confessional theology which have been occupying our attention had their historical origin and occasion subsequent to the time of the Westminster Assembly and had no direct reference to the contents of the Westminster Confession. From them we pass to consider certain declaratory statements or acts, also subsequent to the seventeenth century, but the express purpose of which has been to disavow inferences drawn from statements in the existing Creed or to explicate particular doctrines in some aspects considered to be less fully stated in the Subordinate Standards than appears desirable.

(1) To the United Presbyterian Church belongs the distinction of being the first Scottish presbyterian Church to engage in this kind of reconstruction. There were currents of thought and religious tendencies at work throughout Christendom in the second half of the nineteenth century which had their own share in leading the Church of the Secession to reconsider its relations to certain portions of the Westminster document. But action, which might have been indefinitely delayed, was precipitated in 1877, when two of the younger ministers of the Church, from different standpoints and with differing methods, made formal demands for a revision of the Confession. In both instances

the Synod refused to accede to the demand, largely because of the pleadings with which, in each case, the overture was supported; but, when doing so, frankly recognised that there was room, if not need, for readjusting some of the proportions of Christian doctrine in the Confession, and indicated readiness to consider the proposal in its broad aspects. The unanimous finding of the Court, after a preamble condemning the attitude and language of the two innovators and declaring unaltered adherence to Westminster documents, was in these words:—‘In respect of the great importance of the question raised, the difficulty of any one section of the Presbyterian Church moving alone in a matter which affects the relations of all, and other matters requiring grave deliberation, the Synod appoints a Committee to consider the whole subject.’¹ The work of this body extended from 1877 to 1879. A Declaratory Statement was drafted and sent down to Presbyteries and Sessions for examination, discussion and suggestions. In an amended and completed form this document was adopted by the Synod in 1879 and became the Declaratory Act of the United Presbyterian Church.² The preamble of the Act founds the Church’s action (1) on the necessary and acknowledged imperfection of all human standards, (2) on exception already taken to symbolical teaching on one important

¹ *Life and Letters of John Cairns, D.D., LL.D.* By A. R. MacEwen, D.D. Chap. xxiv. pp. 664-67. *The Church of Scotland: Her Divisions and Re-Unions.* By C. G. M’Crie, D.D., pp. 297-99.

² *Subordinate Standards of the United Presbyterian Church*, pp. 91-3.

subject [Chap. XXIII.—‘Of the Civil Magistrate’], and (3) on the fact that there are other subjects in regard to which it has been found desirable to set forth more fully and clearly the view which the Synod takes of the teaching of Holy Scripture.

The declarations of the Act are seven in number and treat the following subjects in the following manner and order.¹

I. REDEMPTION.—In connection with this doctrine as taught in the Standards and in consistency therewith it is declared that there are ‘matters which have been and continue to be regarded by this Church as vital in the system of gospel truth, and to which due prominence ought ever to be given.’ These vital matters are: ‘the love of God to all mankind, His gift of His Son to be the propitiation for the sins of the whole world, and the free offer of salvation to men without distinction on the ground of Christ’s perfect sacrifice.’

II. THE DIVINE DECREES.—This doctrine, which includes that of election to eternal life, is declared to be held by the United Presbyterian Church ‘in connection and harmony with the truth’ that God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance, and that He has provided a salvation sufficient for all, adapted to all, and offered to all in the gospel; as also with the responsibility

¹ The seven articles of the United Presbyterian Declaratory Act are numbered as adopted by the Synod in 1879, but no descriptive title is prefixed to the several articles. For the titles given in the text the lecturer is responsible.

of every man for his dealing with the free and unrestricted offer of eternal life.'

III. MAN'S TOTAL DEPRAVITY AND LOSS OF 'ALL ABILITY OF WILL TO ANY SPIRITUAL GOOD ACCOMPANYING SALVATION.'¹—This doctrine, it is declared, 'is not held as implying such a condition of man's nature as would affect his responsibility under the law of God and the gospel of Christ, or that he does not experience the strivings and restraining influences of the Spirit of God, or that he cannot perform actions in any sense good; although actions which do not spring from a renewed heart are not spiritually good or holy—such as accompany salvation.'

IV. DESTINY OF THE HEATHEN AND OF CHILDREN DYING IN INFANCY.—While the Church adheres to the Westminster positions that none are saved except through the mediation of Christ and by the grace of His Holy Spirit, 'who worketh when, and where, and how He pleaseth,'² that the duty of sending the gospel to the heathen, who are sunk in ignorance, sin, and misery is clear and imperative, and that the outward and ordinary means of salvation for those capable of being called by the Word are the ordinances of the gospel, she does not require those who accept her Standards to hold 'that any who die in infancy are lost, or that God may not extend His

¹ The portion of the title within inverted commas is taken from the *Confession of Faith*. Chap. IX. iii. 'Of Free Will.'

² *Confession of Faith*. Chap. X. iii. 'Of Effectual Calling.'

grace to any who are without the pale of ordinary means, as it may seem good in His sight.'

V. THE PROVINCE OF THE CIVIL MAGISTRATE AND THE HEADSHIP OF CHRIST.—In regard to the authority and duty of civil rulers in the sphere of religion, as taught in the Standards, the Church regards that matter in the light of the doctrine 'that the Lord Jesus Christ is the only King and Head of the Church,'¹ and 'Head over all things to the Church, which is His body,'² and so she 'disapproves of all compulsory or persecuting and intolerant principles in religion; and declares, as hitherto, that she does not require approval of anything in her Standards that teaches, or may be supposed to teach, such principles.'

VI. MAINTENANCE OF ORDINANCES AND MISSIONS.—On this subject the position of the United Presbyterian Church is stated in a single sentence to the effect, 'that Christ has laid it as a permanent and universal obligation upon His Church, at once to maintain her own ordinances, and to preach the gospel to every creature;³ and has ordained that His people provide by their free-will offerings for the fulfilment of this obligation.'

VII. THE EXTENT AND LIMITS OF CHRISTIAN LIBERTY.—The Act recognises 'liberty of opinion on such points in the Standards not entering into the substance of the faith,' affirms that to be 'in accordance with the practice hitherto observed in this

¹ *Confession of Faith.* Chap. XXV. vi. 'Of the Church.'

² *Ephesians* i. 22-23.

³ *S. Mark* xvi. 15.

13

Church,' gives as a specimen of non-essential points in the Standards 'the interpretation of the "six days" in the Mosaic account of the creation'; and intimates that while this liberty is allowed it is the duty of the Church to guard against the abuse of it which might prove 'to the injury of its unity and peace.'

The compilers of this declaratory document did not regard their Statement as contradicting or conflicting with the confessional doctrine of their Church. By the employment of such phrases as 'in consistency therewith,' 'in connection and harmony with,' 'in accordance with,' it is plainly intimated that no alteration in the substance of what the Church had heretofore confessed was intended or contemplated. 'We propose nothing,' said Dr Cairns when presenting the first draft of the Act to the Synod in 1878, 'in the way of repeal or abrogation or recall of the Standards. We only propose what will explain them and free them from difficulty, and also put them in such a position as will grant liberty here and there which was not formally allowed, although generally believed to be acted upon.'¹

And so far as the doctrines of grace are concerned the contention may be allowed. The most Calvinistic tenet in the Westminster symbol is that of the Divine Decree as laid down in the third chapter. Now, in their treatment of the elective decree the authors of the United Presbyterian Declaratory Act simply exhibited another side of truth, that of 'a salvation

¹ *Life and Letters, ut sup.* p. 674.

sufficient for all, adapted to all, and offered to all in the gospel.' This is Pauline universalism, the complement of Pauline particularism, and both these truths have been held by moderate Calvinists, and both were held, we have seen reason to believe, by the Calvinistic divines of Westminster, without any conscious inconsistency, and without any attempt to demonstrate their harmony.

There is, however, one article in the Declaratory Act of 1879 which it is impossible to regard as simply an explanation of certain statements to be found in the Confession. It is the fifth of the series which states the position reached by the Church of the nineteenth century regarding the province and the power of civil rulers. On this subject it is neither an explanation nor an explication of the authority with which the twenty-third chapter invests magistrates that is called for on the part of modern Churches. It is disavowal, it is a disclaimer of everything they have ceased to believe on that subject as their reforming and puritan fathers believed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. And the fifth article is virtually a repudiation of intrusive, compulsory and intolerant principles, the repudiation being expressed in the form of a disapproval, which is not strengthened but weakened by the employment of the favourite Secession formula, 'that she does not require approval of anything in her Standards that teaches, *or may be supposed to teach*, such principles.'

In this respect, to this extent the Secession De-

claratory Act of 1879 was a reconstructing Act, it was a genuine although limited recasting of symbolic theology in the case of a subordinate article of the living faith.

(2) For ten years after the United Presbyterian Church had made this advance movement in the direction of creed construction no other Church in Scotland took action in the matter. But in 1889 the significant fact that not fewer than twenty-two overtures, transmitted from all parts of the country and indicating a greater or less measure of dissatisfaction with the existing Confession, were laid on the table of her General Assembly led the Free Church of Scotland to realise that something more was required to meet the gravity of the situation than a readjustment of Questions and Formula such as had been effected in 1846. And so, in opposition to a motion that the overtures be refused in so far as they suggested the taking of any steps towards a change in the doctrinal standards or in the terms of subscription thereto, a large majority resolved that, 'recognising alike the importance and difficulty of the question thus raised and the indications of a present call to deal with it,' a committee be appointed 'to make inquiry, and to consider carefully what action it is advisable for the Church to take, so as to meet the difficulties and relieve the scruples referred to in so large a number of overtures—it being always understood, that this Church can contemplate the adoption of no change which shall not be consistent with a cordial and

steadfast adherence to the great doctrines of the Confession.'¹

In the committee several lines of procedure were proposed. One party pled for the construction, not of a compendium of theology, but of an ecclesiastical symbol containing, in briefest possible compass, a statement of those essential, basal beliefs on which the Church rests and in the strength of which she works. Another section indicated a preference for a further readjustment and relaxation of subscription to the Confession as a bond of agreement and adherence. The judgment, however, of the greater number favoured the framing of a Declaratory Act on the lines followed by the United Presbyterian Church in 1879, by the Presbyterian Church of Victoria in 1882, and by the Presbyterian Church of England in 1886.²

By 1891 the committee had made such progress with the work entrusted to them as to be able to present to the Assembly of that year a draft form of declaration which was approved of and sent down as an overture to Presbyteries. Having received the approval of a large majority of the provincial courts, the Assembly of 1892 passed it, as a Declaratory Act of the Free Church of Scotland.³ The preamble of

¹ *Proceedings and Debates of the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland*, 1889, p. 137.

² The Declaratory Acts mentioned in the text, with a valuable collection of historical matter bearing on Creeds and Creed Subscription will be found in the *Proceedings and Debates of the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland*, 1890. Appendix to Report of Committee on Confession of Faith.

³ Act xii., 1892. Anent Confession of Faith. *Proceedings and Debates*, 1892, pp. 145-72.

the symbol finds justification of the action of the Church in preparing and adopting a relieving Act in ecclesiastical expediency—the expediency of removing ‘difficulties and scruples which have been felt by some in reference to the declaration of belief required from persons who receive licence or are admitted to office.’

The matters dealt with in the declaration of 1892 are six in number, and are stated and treated in the following order and manner.¹

I. THE DOCTRINE OF GRACE. While holding and teaching the confessional doctrine regarding ‘the Divine purpose of grace towards those who are saved, and the execution of that purpose in time,’ the Act makes earnest proclamation of what the Church regards ‘as standing in the forefront of the revelation of Grace, the love of God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—to sinners of mankind, manifested especially in the Father’s gift of the Son to be the Saviour of the world, in the coming of the Son to offer Himself a Propitiation for sin, and in the striving of the Holy Spirit with men to bring them to repentance.’

II. THE DOCTRINE OF FOREORDINATION. Calvinists have been charged with teaching that the lost have been foreordained to eternal death without any respect to sin on their part. This article affirms there is no ground for such a charge. It points out that ‘all who hear the Gospel are warranted and required to believe

¹ The six articles of the Free Church Declaratory Act, adopted by the General Assembly of 1892, are not numbered, and have no descriptive titles. The lecturer is responsible for the titles in the text.

to the saving of their souls,' so that those who do not believe are guilty of sin and will perish in their sins—the issue is due to their own rejection of the call. This Church does not teach, and does not regard the Confession as teaching, the foreordination of men to death irrespective of their own sin.

III. THE MEANS OF GRACE. The article opens with a statement of the calling and duty of believers as regards the Gospel. Not only ministers and missionaries but all who believe are called and bound to make known the Gospel to all men everywhere for the obedience of faith. This is the ordinary way of salvation for those to whom it is made known. While this is so, there are two large sections of the human race to whom the ordinary means of grace cannot be made known. There are those who die in infancy, and there are those who are beyond the reach of the means of salvation. In the case of the former the Article affirms that no one is obliged by anything of 'good and necessary consequence deduced from Scripture,'¹ or by anything in the Confession to believe that any child dying in infancy is lost; and in the case of the heathen who have not heard the Gospel God 'may extend His mercy, for Christ's sake, and by His Holy Spirit . . . as it may seem good to Him, according to the riches of His grace.'

IV. THE FALLEN STATE. The statements in the Westminster Confession regarding the corruption and depravity of fallen human nature are strong and

¹ *Confession of Faith*, Chap. I. vi.

sweeping. Our first parents are represented as by their sin falling from their original righteousness and communion with God, and so becoming 'dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body.' This death in sin and corruption of nature have been conveyed to their posterity, and in virtue thereof all mankind 'are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil.'¹ It is well known to students of the period that at the time of the Westminster Assembly Calvinistic theologians, when dealing with the Pelagian view of human nature that lurks under Arminianism, found it necessary to accentuate the fact that all spiritual good comes from without and from above, and is the direct fruit of grace, the immediate result of the presence and working of the Holy Spirit. They were thus led to picture the condition of fallen humanity as is done in the sixth chapter of the Confession.

There is no reason to believe that they failed to take account of the facts of human history which are fitted to relieve the darkness of the picture they have drawn; there is evidence to the contrary. Others, however, their successors, accepting their presentation of the fallen state in an abstract manner, and not keeping their minds in contact with the relieving facts, gradually parted with the meaning and ethical value which these factors in human experience have

¹ *Confession of Faith*. Chap. VI. 'Of the Fall of Man, of Sin, and of the Punishment thereof.'

for thoughtful observers, and laid themselves open to the charge of virtually denying the survival and working of the natural virtues as displayed in unregenerate human nature.

The Free Church article does not say that the Confession is chargeable with this denial. But it gives it to be known that while the Church endorses the confessional doctrine of the fallen state she also recognises tokens of God's goodness in maintaining among sinful men certain elements that are fitted to remind one of the original greatness and grandeur of human nature, and that suggest what is wanting of its true ideal. The recognition is made in full view of the fact that the surviving natural virtues 'do not bring men back to God, do not take away the root sin of ungodliness, and do not carry in them the life of true goodness.'¹ All this is succinctly stated in the Article, when, after an acceptance of confessional teaching regarding the corruption of man's whole nature as fallen, it goes on to affirm:—'This Church also maintains that there remain tokens of his greatness as created in the image of God; that he possesses a knowledge of God and of duty; that he is responsible for compliance with the moral law and with the Gospel; and that, although unable without the aid of the Holy Spirit to return to God, he is yet capable of affections and actions which in themselves are virtuous and praiseworthy.'

¹ *Explanatory Notes on the Declaratory Act of the Free Church of Scotland.* By Robert Rainy, D.D.

V. INTOLERANT PRINCIPLES. On this well-worn theme of controversy the authors of the Free Church Declaratory Act carefully abstain from giving their individual opinion regarding the teaching of Westminster. That is a departure from and an improvement upon the legislative act of 1846 in which the Free Church committed herself to the highly questionable position that the Confession does not, when fairly interpreted, favour intolerance or persecution. All that the Church felt called upon to do in 1892 was, in the words of the relieving Act, to disclaim 'intolerant or persecuting principles' and to make it known that she did not 'consider her office-bearers, in subscribing the Confession, committed to any principles inconsistent with liberty of conscience and the right of private judgment.'

VI. MINOR MATTERS. The article on this subject does not distinguish between what is and what is not de fide, between what enters into the substance of the Reformed Faith as exhibited in the Confession and what is outside thereof, although stated in the symbol. It also abstains from making any enumeration or giving any illustration of what may be considered matters of lesser importance concerning which diversity of opinion ought to be allowed. It simply recognises and sanctions the existence of 'diversity of opinion on such points in the Confession as do not enter into the substance of the Reformed Faith therein set forth.' An abuse, however, of this recognition is conceivable. A man may reject what is essential or

fundamental in doctrine and yet affirm that his rejection is only of a matter of subordinate importance. Such procedure, if tolerated, would manifestly imperil purity of doctrine and discipline in the Church. The Church, it is evident, cannot accept any individual opinion as to what is of the substance of the Faith. She must form her own judgment, when a case arises, whether a particular tenet touches the substance of revealed truth or not. And this the article explicitly declares, for its leading affirmation is that 'the Church retains full authority to determine, in any case which may arise, what points fall within this description, and thus to guard against any abuse of this liberty to the detriment of sound doctrine, or to the injury of her unity and peace.'

It will be observed that the Articles in the declarations of the United Presbyterian and the Free Church respectively, while they differ in number, in order of statement and in forms of expression, run closely parallel in their leading affirmations. They deal chiefly with the Pauline, Augustinian, or Calvinistic doctrines of grace. And in reference to these doctrines they concern themselves about two things. *First*, to extricate them from popular fallacies and controversial inferences which have been drawn from the Confessional statements, but for which Westminster Calvinists are not responsible. *Second*, to explicate the doctrines by setting alongside of them another side of Scripture truth not made conspicuous in the Confession, but consistent with it. There is another

matter which the two declarations have in common. The practical concern of both is with the Confession as a Bond of acceptance and adherence. That appears in the preambles of the documents. The opening paragraph of the Act of 1879 mentions the Formula 'in which the subordinate Standards are accepted' requiring assent to them 'as an exhibition of the sense in which the Scriptures are understood.' In the case of the Act of 1892 the difficulties and scruples of which it is deemed expedient to attempt the removal are those which have arisen in reference to the declaration of belief required from persons who receive licence or are admitted to office.

The action taken by the two Churches when in possession of their relieving acts amply confirms this view. So soon as the United Presbyterian Church had passed hers she altered the second question in the formula for admission to office, that which related to the Subordinate Standards. Subsequent to 1879 that question was in these terms:—'Do you acknowledge the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms as an exhibition of the sense in which you understand the Holy Scriptures, *this acknowledgment being made in view of the explanations contained in the Declaratory Act of Synod thereanent?*'¹

In the case of the Free Church, it was, from the first, contemplated to make practical use of the Declaratory Act in two ways. One of these was by

¹ *Subordinate Standards of the United Presbyterian Church.* Formula for Ministers at Ordination or Induction, p. 113.

drawing up a statement which would set forth the relation in which the Act of 1892 stood to the Subordinate Standards. This way was taken in 1894, by the General Assembly enacting and declaring as follows: 'Whereas the Declaratory Act, 1892, was passed to remove difficulties and scruples which have been felt by some in reference to the declaration of belief required from persons who receive licence or are admitted to office in this Church, the Assembly hereby declare that the statements of doctrine contained in the said Act are not therefore imposed upon any of the Church's office-bearers as part of the standards of the Church, but that those who are licensed or ordained to office in this Church, in answering the questions and subscribing the formula are entitled to do so in view of the said Declaratory Act.'¹

The other way of giving the Declaratory Act operative effect was to make certain alterations upon the terms of the Questions and the Formula. Some progress in this direction had been made in the Committee on the Confession, and a proposed re-adjustment in the form of a new Act, a new set of Questions, and a new Formula was submitted to the Assembly of 1894.² By the Supreme Court, however, it was deemed advisable to proceed no further in the matter, but that it should be left to be revived at some future date. The Church at large acquiesced the more readily in this finding of the Assembly seeing

¹ *Proceedings and Debates*, 1894. *Acts of 1894*, Act x.

² *Ibid.* Report xxxiii.

that in that same year the Free Church of Scotland set her face determinedly in the direction of union with the United Presbyterian Church. Such a union, if consummated, would obviously necessitate a readjustment of Questions and Formula for the united Church.

The union took place at Edinburgh on the 31st of October 1900. Upon that epoch-marking day the first General Assembly of the United Free Church of Scotland adopted a Uniting Act to which were appended Four Declarations. Neither in the Act nor in the Declarations is there any explicit mention of either the Confession of Faith or of the Declaratory Acts of the uniting Churches.¹ But the Assembly

¹ In the Uniting Act of Oct. 31, 1900, it is stated that the Committees of the negotiating Churches 'having met and communicated to one another the existing *doctrinal standards*, rules and methods of the two Churches, it appeared that in regard to doctrine, government, discipline, and worship therein set forth, a remarkable and happy agreement obtained between them,' etc. *Proceedings of the General Assembly of the United Free Church of Scotland*, October-November, 1900, p. 60.

The original intention was to incorporate the four Declarations with the Uniting Act. It was considered desirable, however, to make the latter document as brief and simple as possible, and so the former one was appended to it. The declarations are as follows :—

I. The various matters of agreement between the Churches with a view to Union are accepted and enacted without prejudice to the inherent liberty of the United Church, as a Church of Christ, to determine and regulate its own constitution and laws as duty may require, in dependence on the grace of God and under the guidance of His Word.

II. The Larger and Shorter Catechisms of the Westminster Assembly, received and sanctioned by the General Assembly of 1648, and heretofore enumerated among the doctrinal standards of the United Presbyterian Church, continue to be received in the United Church as manuals of religious instruction long approved, and held in honour by the people of both Churches.

III. As this Union takes place on the footing of maintaining the liberty of judgment and action heretofore recognised in either of the Churches uniting, so, in particular, it is hereby declared that members of both Churches, and also of all Churches which in time past have

which adopted the Uniting Act and the Four Declarations also approved of and accepted Questions and a Formula agreed upon by the two Churches prior to the union, and referred to in the Uniting Act. To these documents there is prefixed a preamble to be publicly read as often as the questions are put and the Formula is subscribed. In this it is declared: 'that the following Questions are put in view of Act 1647 approving of the Confession of Faith; Act xii. 1846 of the Free Church of Scotland; Declaratory Act 1879 of the United Presbyterian Church; and Act xii. 1892, with relative Act of 1894 of the Free Church; and that Probationers, Ministers, and Missionaries are entitled to avail themselves of any of these Acts.'¹ In the matter of the new Questions and Formula the differences between what had been employed in the separate Churches and what is presently in use in the United Free Church are differences in drafting, in phrasing, and in the ordering of clauses. These, however, lie outside our present inquiry for this important reason that in the readjusted scheme of questions and

united with either of them, shall have full right as they see cause, to assert and maintain the views of truth and duty which they had liberty to maintain in the said Churches.

IV. While thankfully owning the goodness of God in time past, in moving the hearts of their people to provide means for carrying on the work of the Gospel, the Churches in entering into Union, and under a sense of their present and future responsibilities as a Church of Christ, desire afresh to acknowledge the obligation resting on the Church to labour for the universal diffusion of the Gospel, and the duty of its members to contribute, according to their ability, for the support of the cause of Christ throughout the world. *Proceedings, ut sup.* pp. 75-76.

¹ *Proceedings, ut sup.* Appendix. Questions and Formula for the United Church.

the abbreviated formula of subscription no mention is made of the Declaratory Acts of 1879 and 1892.

Out of this brief survey of the formation, contents, and subsequent history of the declaratory and relieving Acts the question naturally arises, in what sense and to what extent ought the term reconstructive to be applied to them?

When the existing Confession is regarded and treated as a Bond of agreement and adherence no change has been made upon it by the enacting and using the Declaratory Acts. The Churches that framed and adopted the declarations did not intend to change the bond, and they did not believe they had done so. The committee of the Free Church charged with the constructing of the Act 1892, while willing that criticism should be freely applied to their work, confidently asserted that the document as framed by them and by them offered to the Church imported no change in confessional theology. And the Assembly of 1894, after two years' study of it, took the same view. Not content with declaring that the statements of doctrine contained in the Act are not imposed upon any of the Church's office-bearers as part of the standards of the Church, the Assembly went on to express their satisfaction 'that the Act is in full harmony with the principles laid down for the guidance of the committee by the Assembly of 1889, viz., "That the Church can contemplate no change which shall not be consistent with a cordial and steadfast adherence to the great

doctrines of the Confession.”’¹ And so the bond of acceptance between the Church and her office-bearers remains unchanged by what was done by one Church in 1879 and by the other in 1892—the bond is nothing more than and it is nothing less than a mutual owning and believing ‘the doctrine set forth in the Confession of Faith approved by Acts of General Synods and Assemblies.’

On the other hand, when the Declaratory Acts which the two uniting Churches carried with them into the union are examined in their relation to the Confession of Faith viewed as an exhibition of the living Faith of the Church of the present day, the contention that there has been no change effected seems untenable. It may be that no alteration has been made as regards what are styled ‘the grand doctrines of the Church,’ any deviation from confessional statement in the case of these being in setting, proportion, perspective, not in substance or in essence. That, however, cannot be affirmed of everything within the four corners of the Confession and of the Declarations. ‘A Confession,’ it has been well said, ‘is as much changed by additions as it is by deductions.’² Are there not, then, additions made to the exhibition of the existing faith of the Church in some of the articles of the two Declaratory Acts? Take the earlier Act of 1879. The Presby-

¹ *Proceedings and Debates of the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland*, 1894, p. 83.

² *The Law of Creeds in Scotland*. By A. Taylor Innes. Chap. IV. p. 189.

terian Church in the United States of America, when engaged upon a revision of the Westminster Symbol, came to the conclusion that the doctrine of the External Call or the Gospel Offer is not adequately treated in the Confession. The American revisionists were of opinion that the divines of the Jerusalem Chamber were 'too much absorbed with the inward call of the Holy Spirit and its great sequences of salvation to care to do more than explicitly to recognise and indicate in outline the external call of the Word.'¹ And so, as we have seen, they made a substantial addition to the Confession by supplementing its chapters with one which treats 'Of the Love of God and Missions.' But a quarter of a century earlier the Church of the Secession in Scotland did virtually the same thing, although on a smaller scale and in a somewhat different way. For the sixth article of the United Presbyterian Church Declaratory Act consists of this affirmation, 'That Christ has laid it as a permanent and universal obligation upon His Church, at once to maintain her own ordinances, and to "preach the gospel to every creature;" and has ordained that His people provide by their free-will

¹ 'No doubt the doctrine of the External Call underlies the whole of the Confession; and important elements of it are here and there clearly asserted, as, *e.g.*, in the Tenth Chapter, where its relations to the internal Call is fully explicated. . . . But the Confession was too busy developing the contents of the Gospel to stay to expand into all its details the doctrine of "the Gospel" itself; it was too much absorbed with the inward call of the Holy Spirit and its great sequences of salvation, to care to do more than explicitly to recognise and indicate in outline the external call of the Word.' Prof. B. B. Warfield. *The Confession of Faith as Revised in 1903*, p. 21. Richmond, Va. 1904.

offerings for the fulfilment of this obligation.' The description of the American chapter given by a distinguished Princeton divine may be applied to the Scottish article and it declared to be 'just a sound bit of Calvinistic theology, which perfectly homologates with the total contents of the Confession.'¹ But the contents of the article cannot be claimed as an integral part of Westminster confessional teaching. They are of the nature of an addition, and a Confession is changed by addition.

Then take the later Act of 1892. The fifth article, as we have seen, disclaims intolerant or persecuting principles and frees office-bearers from the charge of being committed to any principles inconsistent with liberty of conscience and the right of private judgment. But are there no positions laid down in the Confession which are inconsistent with these things? The chapter in the Westminster Symbol 'Of Christian Liberty and Liberty of Conscience' contains the oft-quoted aphorism, 'God alone is Lord of the Conscience';² but the value of that affirmation is seriously diminished by the concession made in the closing section of the same chapter, to the effect that all persons, who upon pretence of Christian liberty, publish 'erroneous opinions or practices, as, either in their own nature, or in the manner of publishing or maintaining them, are destructive to the external peace and order which Christ hath established in the Church' may be proceeded against, not only 'by the

¹ Prof. B. B. Warfield. *Ut sup.* p. 21.

² Chap. XX. ii.

censures of the Church' but also '*by the power of the civil magistrate.*'¹ The Churches of the present day have ceased to believe that, because they have ceased to think about toleration and liberty, about the province and the power of civil rulers as men thought in the seventeenth century. Here again there is an addition; and a Confession is changed by addition.

From all this it would seem to follow that in a small but true way the reconstruction of Scottish confessional theology began in 1879, when a large section of the Presbyterian Church in Scotland entered upon the work of setting forth more fully and clearly its views of the teaching of Holy Scripture, and did so on the ground that the Subordinate Standards, 'being of human composition, are necessarily imperfect.'

III. RECONSTRUCTION OF CONFESSIONAL THEOLOGY IN THE FUTURE.

What, it may be asked, are the prospects of a larger reconstruction?

It lies beyond the scope and limits of this historical enquiry to forecast the future, and so an answer to that question must be restricted to a few closing sentences.

The plea for a new and simpler creed has been put in, and of late years it has been urged with the

¹ Chap. XX. iv.

insistence of strong conviction.¹ What *can* the Presbyterian Churches in Scotland do in response to such a plea? What *ought* they to do?

An answer to the first of these questions is easily given. If it can be shown that the existing Confession does not adequately express the present belief, convictions, and attainments of the living Church, then it is both the right and the duty of the Church to frame a new one. Should alteration of formula be deemed inadequate there are other two lines of procedure, one or other of which may be adopted. The Churches interested and free to take action may construct a practically new and a simpler Creed by subjecting the present one to a process of revision, adding, deducting, and altering as may seem called for. By confining the contents to what are cardinal or fundamental articles, and striking out all that does not enter into the substance of the Reformed Faith, what, as it stands, is a lengthy, minutely detailed symbol might be made smaller and simpler, without sacrificing its individuality or destroying its identity. As we have seen that is the line taken by some of the Presbyterian Churches of the United States. But American revision does not yield much encouragement to the Churches on this side the Atlantic to add to the number of Westminster Revised Versions. Leaving out of view the Cumberland Revision—a strange and saddening attempt to

¹ See, e.g., *Essays towards a New Theology*. By Robert Mackintosh, B.D. 1889.

turn a pronouncedly Calvinistic symbol into an Arminian one,¹ it cannot be said that any American Revised Version is a success. However reverently and cautiously executed, it is not reasonable to expect success to attend an endeavour to patch a venerable weighty document with modern interpolations, to disfigure a finished product of architectural genius and skill with crude excrescences of recent manufacture. The warning of the Master against inserting a piece of undressed cloth into an old garment, or filling old wine-skins with new liquor, seems applicable to the matter in hand, and ought to be given heed to.

The other line of procedure open to such Churches as are free to take it up is that of placing the Westminster Confession in the archives of Christian symbolics alongside of the *Symbolum Apostolicum* of the second century, the old Scotch Confession of 1560, and the Confession of Faith or National

¹ 'The opening nineteenth century saw the rise in what was then the extreme western portion of the United States, of a body of Christians who by inheritance were so related to the Westminster Confession that they found it difficult to discard it altogether, but who in their fundamental theology had drifted away from the Reformed faith, to which it gives so clear and well-compacted an expression. By this combination of circumstances there was produced at last a modification of the Westminster Confession, which was directed not to the adjustment of details of teaching that lay on the periphery of its system of doctrine, but to the dissection out of it of its very heart. An Arminianised Westminster Confession is something of a portent: yet it is just this that the Cumberland Presbyterians sought to frame for themselves (1814), and to which, having in a fashion framed it, they clung for nearly three-quarters of a century.' *The Printing of the Westminster Confession*. IV. *In Modification*. Article by Prof. B. B. Warfield in *Presbyterian and Reformed Review*, July, 1902, p. 385.

Covenant of 1580, and then proceeding to construct an entirely new symbol. Ought the Churches of Scotland to engage in such a reconstruction of their Confessional theology? The right to frame an entirely new Confession, no one worthy of a hearing would think of calling in question, but the expediency of such a work at the present time is open to debate. The desirableness of a simplified common doctrinal bond of agreement among the Reformed Churches of our land may be apparent, but we may not be prepared for it just at present. 'The pear may be ripening; but,' it may be said, 'it is not ripe yet.'¹

And there are certainly considerations of a weighty nature which ought to be well pondered before such a work of reconstruction is entered upon. It has been said, for example, that not every generation is qualified to construct confessions, that only great epochs can produce great creeds, and that our own age, marked as it is by criticism, doubt and disintegration in theology, is not a creed-making one. Then it has been pointed out that it is a right and

¹ 'The right to frame a new confession or to revise the old ones is beyond dispute. The desirableness of a common doctrinal bond of union among the Reformed Churches is likewise apparent. But the expediency of such a work at the present time is, to say the least, very doubtful. The pear may be ripening, but it is not ripe yet. If we were ready for it, I would say, let us take this course, but we are not prepared for it at this time, and perhaps not for a number of years. *The Consensus of the Reformed Confessions, as related to the present state of Evangelical Theology.* 1877. By Philip Schaff. Reprinted in *Christ and Christianity. Studies on Christology, Creeds and Confessions, etc.*, 1885, p. 181.

good thing for the Church of to-day not to cut itself off from the past, but to cherish the consciousness of connection with the Church of the past. There is distinct gain in uttering the present faith in such a way or form as will bring out the consent of all the ages and will make manifest the durable identity and oneness in the faith of all believers. In this connection it has been adequately and nobly said : ‘There is truth attained which abides, though all be not truth which the Church in any one age may be disposed to take for truth. There is a consent which echoes from age to age as well as from man ; and the testimony of the Church is not merely the consent of the Church in one age, but also of the Church in sundry ages. It is well to feel this, and to make it felt, that believers, with whatever infirmities, drawing from one fountain of knowledge, and sitting at the feet of one teacher, have been learning the same lessons. It is well to make it felt, that the truth is not a fashion of our minds, but durable and perennial, and receives the same testimony from men in different times.¹

While such considerations ought to be well weighed before the Churches commit themselves to the work of drawing up a new and shorter Confession they present nothing that constitutes an insuperable barrier in the way of the work being entered upon. We never

¹ *Delivery and Development of Christian Doctrine.* Cunningham Lectures. By Robert Rainy, D.D. 1874. Lec. VI. p. 273. The lecture from which the extract is taken—‘On Creeds’—ought to be read and studied in connection with the subject of this lecture.

escape doing what it is right to do by saying that it involves formidable difficulties. If there be a fair call, if a substantial case can be made out, not merely for readjustment but for the reconstruction of Scotland's confessional theology, then it is nothing short of sin for the Church of Scotland to delay taking up the task. She deliberately exchanged the symbol of her Reformers for that of the Westminster Divines after using the former for only 87 years. But 258 years have passed since the latter became her authorised subordinate standard. What changes in human thought, what advances in human knowledge have been registered since the Jerusalem Chamber Assembly met and formulated a 'Common Confession of Faith for the three Kingdoms!' Without a touch of exaggeration, with masterly precision of statement, we have been told how the matter stands. 'Philosophies,' writes the Principal of Westminster College at Cambridge, 'have risen and given place to others. The whole *corpus* of the physical sciences has been created. Our reading of ancient history has been entirely re-written. Theology has been enriched by the addition of fresh departments. Its methods of ascertaining and of interpreting the sacred text have changed since the days of the English Puritans. Inquiries undreamt of by them have, by vastly enlarging our knowledge of Bible literature, profoundly modified our attitude towards it; so that even the divine who stands to-day most faithfully on the lines of Puritan teaching has another outlook from the Puritans and speaks another

language, even while he believes and utters the old truths.'¹

If that be so—and no competently informed reader of history will question the accuracy of the survey—is there not a clear call to the Churches in Scotland holding the Presbyterian system to construct a new and simpler Confession which will be pronounced by some future Assembly of the National United Church of Scotland 'to be most agreeable to the word of God, and in nothing contrary to the received doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of this Kirk'?

¹ *Recent Action by British Churches in relation to the Westminster Confession of Faith.* Paper read by the Rev. Principal J. Oswald Dykes, D.D., at Eighth General Council of the Alliance of Reformed Churches held at Liverpool, 1904. *Proceedings*, p. 107.

INDEX

[The names of writings and places are printed in italics. The figures that are in italics refer to the notes.]

- ABERDEEN, General Assembly at, in 1616, 28, 28.
- Act, Churches (Scotland). 1905, 256.
- Concerning Doctrine, by Assembly of Church of Scotland, 269.
- Concerning the Doctrine of Grace by Secession Church, 125, 270-3, 271, 272.
- Declaratory, Free Church, 286-293; two uses of, contemplated, 294, 295; six articles of, 288-293.
- — United Presbyterian Church, what occasioned by, 279-280; seven articles of, 281-284; on 'Six Days,' 155, 156.
- — Free and United Presbyterian, matters in common, 293, 294; in what sense, to what extent reconstructive, 298-302.
- Ratifying Westminster Confession and settling Presbyterian Church Government, 50.
- Scottish Parliament of, in 1693, 227, 228, 247.
- Test, of 1681, and Scottish Confessions, 49.
- Uniting, of Free Church and United Presbyterian Church, 296, 296.
- Adamson, John, Minister of Liberton, and Aberdeen Confession, 29.
- William, Dr, Lives of Morison and Ferguson, 133.
- Alasco, John, *Summa Doctrinae*, 17, 68.
- Alexander, C. F., in *Nicene Creed*, 13.
- America*, revision of Westminster Confession in, 259-267, 303-304.
- Ames, William, English Divine and Federal Theologian, 69, 70.
- Amyrault, or Amyraldus, M., in France and Holland, Calvinist and Universalist, 110.
- Aquinas, Thomas, his astronomy 148.
- Argyll, Duke of, *Unity of Nature, Reign of Law, Evolution, Creation by Law*, 160-161.
- Articles, Irish, of 1615, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 52; on Predestination, 87; on Reprobation, 91.
- Lambeth, of 1595, 86, 87, 87, 91.
- Thirty-nine, of Church of England, revision of some, by Westminster Assembly, 42.
- Asher, A. K. C., and Subscription Formula of 1693, 247.
- Assembly, *Aberdeen*. See Aberdeen.
- General, of 1643, 39; of 1694, ancient Formula, 228; of 1700, ancient Formula, 229; of 1704, 229; of 1711, ancient Questions and Formula, 230-232; of 1720, ancient *The Marrow*, 123; of 1721, attempt to repeal, 123, 269, 270; of 1722, 123.
- General, of Established Church, in 1901, 248-252; in 1903, 252, 255; in 1905, 256.
- — of Free Church, in Prof. W. R. Smith Case, 190; in Prof. Bruco Case, 194-197; in 1846, altering Questions and Formula, 241-244; in 1889, ancient Confession of Faith, 286; in 1884, ancient Deacons, 244-5; in 1892, ancient Declaratory Act, 287.
- *Westminster*, an advisory body, 42; letter from, to General Assembly of Scotland, 39; Ordinance calling, 36.
- Athanasius, Creed of, 3.
- Atonement, Controversy regarding, in Secession Church, 144, 145.
- Auchterarder*, Established Presbytery of, action regarding Confession of Faith in 1889, 245; in 1899, 247.

- BAILLIE, Robert, of Glasgow, 10, 11, 40, 41, 42, 44, 46.
- Ball, John, Oxford, *The Covenant of Grace*, 69, 69.
- Ballates, The Gude and Godlie*, 6, 6.
- Balmer, Robert, Prof., Preface to Puritan Treatise, 140; libelled, 141; death, 142.
- Bannerman, James, Prof., *The Infallible Truth and Divine Authority of the Holy Scriptures*, 175, 175; uses of Confessions, 208.
- Baxter, Richard, a Calvinist and Universalist, 110.
- Beza, Theodore, and *Confessio Fidei Gallicana*, 187.
- *Confessio Helvetica Posterior*, 57, 57.
- Binnie, William, Prof., Proposed Reconstruction of O. T. History, 185.
- Blair, Robert, wrote Answer of Scottish Assembly to Westminster Assembly, 40.
- William, Dr, biographer and editor of Leighton, 74.
- Bonar, Horatius, Dr, *Catechisms of the Scottish Reformation*, 8.
- Boston, Thomas, on Principal Hadow, 270.
- *Fourfold State*, 123.
- Bourignon, Antoinette, 95, 95.
- Bourignonism, Disowning of, required by General Assembly, 96, 96; omitted from ordination questions by Free Church and Established Church, 97.
- Breach, The, in Secession Church, 239.
- Briggs, C. A., Prof., *Biblical Study*, Higher Criticism, 178; on alleged "damnation of infants" in Westminster Confession, 93.
- Brown, David, Prin., opposed Prof. W. R. Smith, 185.
- G. Hume, Prof., on Scottish Confession of 1560, 17.
- John, Dr, attitude and action in Morison Case, 138, 138; before Secession Synod, 140, 141; publications of *Statement*, 142, 142; libelled, 142, 143; acquitted, 143.
- John, M.D., and Erskine of Linlathen, 100.
- Bruce, A. B., Prof., *Kingdom of God: or, Christ's Teaching according to the Synoptic Gospels*, 192, 193; writings before College Committee and General Assembly, 194, 195; finding of these bodies regarding them, 194, 195; upon M'Leod Campbell's theory of the Atonement, 113.
- Bucer, Martin, at Cambridge, 68.
- Bullinger, Henry, 58, 59, 59, 68.
- Burghers and Anti-Burghers, 273.
- Burnet, Gilbert, Bishop, on use of Westminster Confession in Scotland, 50.
- Butler, D., Rev., *John Wesley and George Whitefield in Scotland*, 126; *Henry Scougal and the Oxford Methodists*, 80; *The Life and Letters of Robert Leighton*, 74, 75, 83.
- CAIRNS, John, Prin., *Memoir of Rev. Dr John Brown*, 144, 144; upon United Presbyterian Declaratory Act, 280, 280, 284.
- Call, External, The, doctrine of, stated by Presbyterian Church of America, 265; and by United Presbyterian Church, 300-301.
- Calvin, John, *Institutes* and Scottish Confession of 1560, 17; influence upon English and Scottish Theology, 59, 63; Felicity or Happiness, place of, in his Catechism, 78; drafted *Confessio Fidei Gallicana*, 187. See also Catechism.
- Calvinism, Formulative principle of, 59, *et seq.*; school of, in Scotland in 1722, 270; of *The Marrow*, 270, 271.
- Calvinists, some also Universalists, 109.
- Cambridge, Melancthon invited to, 58; Martin Bucer at, 68, 69.
- Cameron, John, in France, Calvinist and Universalist, 110.
- Campbell, John M'Leod, Dr, friend of Erskine of Linlathen, 101; theological position at outset of ministry, 101; subsequent teaching on Assurance, 102; on the Atonement, 102; before Church Courts, 103; deposed, 105; admitted his views were contra-confessional, 108; writings subsequent to deposition, 108; *The Nature of the Atonement*, 108; theory of the Atonement, 109-113.
- Carlyle, Thomas, and Erskine of Linlathen, 100.
- Carnock, Thomas Gillespie ordained at, 233.
- Carruthers, William, *Facsimile First Edition of the Shorter Catechism*, 48, 71; *Westminster Confession*, corrected reading of, 218.

- Carstares, William, Prin., Moderator of 1711 General Assembly, 230.
- Cassilis, John, Earl of, and Westminster Assembly, 40.
- Catechism*, Calvin's, 78; used in Scotland, 8, 8, 9.
- Hamilton's, 5, 6.
- Palatine or Heidelberg, 78; Leighton upon, 69.
- Shorter, and *Apostles' Creed*, 11; Leighton upon, 84.
- Chalmers, Thomas, Dr. and Erskine of Linlathen, 100; influence upon Scottish Calvinism and Evangelicism, 126; Conversion, 127; recast theological lectures, 127; *Institutes*, 128; method followed, 128; place of Election in, 129; estimate of Scottish Calvinism, 129; exhibition of Doctrines of Grace, 130; recognised goodness and greatness in fallen human nature, 131; Election and gospel offer, 132; leader of Scottish Disruption, 132; Genesis account of Creation, 149, *et seq.*
- Chambers, Robert, author of *Vestiges of Creation*, 158.
- Charnock, Stephen, *Discourse of God's being the author of Reconciliation*, 70.
- Cheyne, John, Sir, on Declaratory Acts, 248, 254.
- J. K., Dr, on Alexander Geddes, 176; *Founders of Old Testament Criticism*, 176.
- Church, American, revision of Westminster Confession, 259-267, 303.
- Celtic, use of *Apostles' Creed* in, 4, 5.
- English, desire for closer agreement with Church of Scotland, 378.
- Established, of Scotland, distinction between *Creed*s and *Confessions*, 2; recognition of *Apostles' Creed*, 12; readjustment of Questions and Formula, 245-257; Act of Parliament in 1905 to prescribe formula of subscription, 255-7.
- Free, of Scotland, Deacons relieved from signing Confession of Faith, 244, 245; Declaratory Act of, 286-293; readjustment of Questions and Formula, 241-243.
- National, of Scotland, a reconstructed, with a new Confession, 308.
- Roman Catholic, and Celtic Church in Scotland, 5.
- Cocceius, John, and Federalism, 69, 70.
- Columba, St, 4.
- Commissioners, Scottish, favour use of *Apostles' Creed*, 11.
- to England in 1640, 38; to Westminster Assembly, 40.
- Confession*, Aberdeen, 27-35; contents of, 30-33; excellences of, 33-4; neglect of, 34, 35; an exhibition of the existing faith, 215; Augsburg, 53, 58; English, at Geneva, 17; French, of Geneva Academy, 17; Gallican, 187; Helvetic First, 56, 57, 168, 211, 212; Helvetic Second, 57, 57, 168; Scottish First, 14-21, 211, 226; Scottish Second, 23-27, 212-214, 226-227; Westminster and Scottish contrasted, 54; Westminster, 41-49, 50-65, 120-121, 146, 147, 169, 170, 171, 215-227, 243-262, 262-267, 268, 289-290, 291-292, 304-305.
- Confessions*, distinction between, and *Creed*s, 1, 2.
- Scottish, as Exhibitions of the Existing Faith, 210-225; as bonds of Agreement and Adherence, 225-257.
- Uses. See Bannerman, Dunlop, Schaff; reducible to two, 209.
- Congregationalism, an Evangelistic force in Scotland, 126.
- Constable, A. H. B., on Formula of Subscription, 247.
- Constitutions Apostolic*, Creed of, 2.
- Cooper, James, Prof., and Scougal, 79, 80.
- Copernicus, ecclesiastical hostility to, 148, 148.
- Covenant, National, or Confession, 21-27.
- Covenants. See Federalism, Preston, Ball, Marrow, Cocceius, Witsius, Charnock, Owen.
- Cowper, William, of Galloway and Aberdeen Confession, 29.
- Craig, John, drafted Second Scottish Confession, 22, 23.
- Cranmor, Archbishop, and the 42 Articles of the Church of England, 58.
- Creation. Statements regarding, in Westminster Confession, 146, 147.
- Creed*, *Apostles'*, 4-13; literature connected with, 3; in Book of Deer, 4, 5; in Hamilton's *Catechism*, 5, 6; in *Gude and Godlie Ballates*, 6, 7; in Scottish Psalters, 9, 10; in Scotland, 6,

- 10; added to Westminster documents, 11; in *The Church Hymnary*, 13; plea for use of, 13; exhibition of the existing Faith, 210, 211; recognition of, by Established Church of Scotland, 12.
- Creed, Nicene, a Legend of the Council of Nice*, 13; reconstructed with *Filioque*, 64, 65.
- Creeds*. See *Confessions*.
- Criticism, Biblical, modern, and Westminster Confession, 205, 206.
- Cullverwell, Ezekiel, author of phrase, God's deed of gift and grant unto mankind, 124.
- Cumberland, U.S.A., revision of Westminster Confession, 303-304, 304.
- Cunningham, William, Prin., on Bullinger, 59, 59; on distinction between Predestination and Foreordination, 90; *Remarks on the Twenty-Third Chapter of the Confession of Faith*, 243, 243.
- Cuvier, Georges, Baron, *Essay on The Theory of the Earth* reviewed by Dr Chalmers, 150.
- DARWIN, Charles, on Evolution, 157; on *Vestiges of Creation*, 158.
- Davidson, A. B., Prof., 197-204; contributions to theological literature, 198, 198; opinions regarding structure, contents, and date of O. T. books, 199, 200; *Theology of the Old Testament*, 200, 200; five periods of O. T. literature, 200-202; literary and historical criticism, 202, 203; legitimate lines of Criticism, 203.
- Days, Six, creation of world in, statements regarding, in Bible and in Westminster Confession, 149; in United Presbyterian Declaratory Act, 284.
- Deacons. See Free Church of Scotland.
- Declarations, Four, adopted by United Free Church at Union, 296, 296, 297.
- Decrees, Divine, statement regarding, by Presbyterian Church of U.S.A., 263; in United Presbyterian Declaratory Act, 281, 282.
- Deer, *Book of*, 4, 4, 5.
- Depravity, Human, statement regarding in United Presbyterian Declaratory Act, 282; in Free Church Declaratory Act, 289-291.
- Dick, John, Prof., theory of degrees of inspiration, 173.
- Diokson, David, joint author of *The Sum of Saving Knowledge*, 71, 72.
- Directory, A, for Church Government, l.c.*, 221, 222.
- *The, for the Public Worship of God*, 221; for Family Worship, 221.
- Discipline, First Book of, The Apostles' Creed and Calvin's Catechism*, 8, 9.
- Divines, Westminster, contribution of, to Creeds of Christendom, 63.
- Doddridge, Philip, Dr, degrees of Inspiration, 172; influence upon Thomas Gillespie, 234.
- Dorner, J. A., Prof., *History of Protestant Theology*, 167, 167, 168.
- Dort*, Canons of Synod of, on Predestination, 87.
- Douglas, G. C. M., Prin., Mosaic authorship of Deuteronomy, 85.
- Robert, Commissioner to Westminster Assembly, 40.
- Draper, J. W., *Intellectual Development of Europe*, 149.
- Driver, T. R., Dr, Cosmogony of Genesis in Book of Genesis, 155.
- Drostan, St, and Celtic Church, 4.
- Drummond, Henry, Prof., *College Essays*, 162; Inaugural Lecture, 162; *Natural Law in the Spiritual World*, 163; *Ascent of Man*, 164, 164, 165, 165; on Evolution, 162, 165, 166; on Scientific Method, 163, 164.
- Dunfermline*, translation of James Wardlaw from Cruden to, 233.
- Dunlop, William, Prof., *Collection of Confessions of Faith, l.c.*, 208, 208; three uses of Creeds and Confessions, 208.
- Durham, James, of Glasgow, joint author of *Sum of Saving Knowledge*, 71, 72.
- Dykes, J. O., Prin., 233, 307, 308.
- EDGAR, Andrew, Dr, *Old Church Life in Scotland*, 10.
- Edwards, Jonathan, On death of Christ, 139.
- Eichhorn, J. G., 'Higher Criticism,' 178.
- Election, Doctrine of, in First Scottish Confession, 18. See also Decree, Foreordination, Predestination.
- Elmslie, W. G., Prof., *The First Chapter of Genesis*, 152.
- England*, Presbyterian Church of, and Declaratory Act, 287.
- Episcopius at Synod of Dort, 19.
- Erskine, Ebenezer, Marrow Man and Seceder, 124.

- Erskine, Ralph, Marrow Man and Seceder, 124; Dunfermline Minister, 233.
- Thomas, of Linlathen, 97-101; work on *Election*, 98; Universalism, 98; Probation and Education, 98, 99; universal restoration, 99; friends and followers, 100, 101.
- Euchologion*, or *Book of Common Order*, 12, 13.
- Evangelicism in Scotland, 120-145.
- Evolution, 157. See Argyll, Huxley, Drummond, Darwin.
- Ewing, Alexander, Bishop, and Erskine of Linlathen, 100.
- FEDERALISM, 66-73; not in Early Creeds and Confessions, 67; of Early English Puritans, 68, *et seq.*; subsequent to Westminster Confession, 69; in Scotland, 70-73.
- Fergus, St, 4.
- Ferguson, Fergus, Dr, *History of the Evangelical Union*, 133; Life of, 133.
- Filioque* in Nicene Creed, 65.
- Fleming, Hay, Dr, 71.
- Foreordination, Doctrine of, in Free Church Declaratory Act, 288.
- Form of Prayer used in Geneva, 7, 7, 86; approved and received by Church of Scotland, 7, 7.
- Formula, Subscription, First, of Scottish Parliament in 1693, 227; Questions framed by Associate Presbytery, 234, 235. See Established Church, Free Church, United Presbyterian Church, Gillespie, M'Crie, Wardlaw.
- Fuller, Thomas, British Puritanism, 65.
- GALILEO, Galilei, Copernican versus Ptolemaic theory, 148.
- Garden, George, Dr, Adopted views of A. Bourignon, 95, 95; deposed by General Assembly, 96, 96.
- Gaussen, Prof., *Theopneustia*, 174.
- Geddes, Alexander, 176-180.
- Genesis*. See Chalmers, Driver, Elmslie, Kurtz, Miller, Days, Geology.
- Geneva, Confession of English Congregation at, 17.
- Geology and traditional rendering of *Genesis*, 151.
- Gib, Adam, Rev., Display, 125.
- Gillespie, George, Scottish Commissioner to Westminster Assembly, 40, 40.
- Thomas, subscribed Confession with qualification, 233.
- Gladstone, W. E., Preface to Hamilton's Catechism, 5.
- Glasse, John, Dr, Calvinistic Theology, 250, 250.
- Government, *Presbyterian Form of*, 221, 222. See Directory.
- Grace, Doctrines of, in Westminster Confession, 120; and in Revised Version of Presbyterian Church of U.S.A., 265, 265; and in Free Church Declaratory Act, 288; Means of, 289.
- Greenshields, James, Episcopal Minister in Edinburgh, treatment of, 230.
- Grub, Prof., on Aberdeen Confession, 34.
- Guthrie, John, Dr, drafted doctrinal declaration of Evangelical Union in 1858, 136, 136.
- William, Rev., *Trial of a Saving Interest in Christ*, 123.
- HADOW, Prin., opposed Marrow Divinity and Divines, 270.
- Hair, John, *Regent Square*, Edward Irving, 105.
- Haldane, The brothers, and Evangelicism in Scotland, 126, 126.
- Robert, and Verbal Inspiration, 174, 174.
- Hall, John, drafted Aberdeen Confession, 29.
- Peter, *Harmony of Protestant Confessions*, 42.
- Hamilton, Archbishop, *Catechism*, 5, 5.
- Patrick, His *Places*, 56, 56.
- Harnack, Adolf, Prof., on Apostles' Creed, 4.
- Heathen, The, destiny of, statements regarding in United Presbyterian and Free Church Declaratory Acts, 282, 283, 289.
- Henderson, Alexander, framer of missive from Scotland to English Lords of the Treaty, 38, 38, 40, 40.
- Heresy, Arian, and Nicene Creed, 64.
- Herkless, John, Prof., on Westminster Confession, 253, 253.
- Hetherington, W. M., Prof., *History of the Westminster Assembly of Divines*, 38.
- Hill, George, Prin., Theory of Degrees of Inspiration, 172, 173.
- Hodge, A. A., Prof., *Westminster Doctrine anent Holy Scripture*, 171; 'Verbal' inspiration, 173, 174.

- Hog, James, of Carnock, first Scottish Editor of the *Marrow*, 122, 123.
- Howie, Robert, successor of Andrew Melville at St Andrews, and Aberdeen Confession, 29, 30.
- — — Dr, Glasgow, *Westminster Doctrine anent Holy Scripture*, Notes, 171.
- Huxley, T. H., Prof., definition of Evolution, 157.
- Hymnary, The Church, Apostles' Creed* in, 13.
- IMITATION, The, of Christ*, 73, 73; when in Scotland, 74; editions of, in Leighton's Library, 74.
- Independents, English, and 'set forms,' 11.
- Infants dying in infancy, teaching regarding, in Westminster Confession, 92-95; in Revised Version of U.S.A. 263, 264; in United Presbyterian Declaratory Act, 282, 283; in Free Church Declaratory Act, 289.
- Innes, A. T., *The Law of Creeds in Scotland*, 14, 27, 54.
- Inspiration, Statements regarding, in Westminster Confession, 170, *et seq.*; degrees, theory of, 172, 173; Verbal, theory of, 173, *et seq.*
- Intolerance, and Westminster Confession, 291-292, 301-302; statement regarding, in Free Church Declaratory Act, 292.
- Ireland.* See Articles.
- Irving, Edward, Rev., and Erskine of Linlathen, 100; appreciation of First Scottish Confession, and depreciation of Westminster Confession, 20, 21, 21.
- JAMES VI. and National Covenant or Confession, 21; Episcopacy in Scotland, 27.
- Jesuits in Scotland in reign of James VI., 21.
- KEBLE, John, quotation from *Christian Year*, 164, 164.
- Kelso*, Anti-Burgher Presbytery of, and Westminster Subscription, 235.
- Kilmarnock*, Formation of Evangelical Union at, in 1843, 132.
- Kirk, John, Prof., completed doctrinal platform of Evangelical Union, 135-136.
- Knox, John, his *History*, 56; letter to, from Beza, 57; the Geneva *Form of Prayers*, 86, 86.
- Kopernik, Nicholas. See Copernicus.
- Kuenen, A., Prof., Deuteronomy a literary fraud, 183.
- Kurtz, J. H., Genesis narrative of Creation, 152.
- LAING, Benjamin, Dr, *Historical Notices of the Ecclesiastical Divisions in Scotland*, 244.
- — — David, Dr, *The Gude and Godlie Ballates*, 6.
- Lambert, Frances, of Avignon, and Patrick Hamilton, 56.
- Lasswade*, Kirk Session of, and *Apostles' Creed*, 10.
- Laud, William, Dr, and Irish Articles, 55.
- Law, T. G., Dr, edition of Hamilton's *Catechism*, 5.
- Leighton, Robert, Dr, *Apostles' Creed*, 10, 10; library of, 74; Principal of Edinburgh College, 74; writings, 74, 75; inwardness of writings, prominence in writings given to Felicity, Happiness, Blessedness, 77, 83.
- Leishman, Thomas, Dr, *The Book of Common Order*, 9, 11.
- Lewis, G. C., Sir, Astronomy of the Ancients, 149.
- Liberty, Christian, extent and limits of, as stated in United Presbyterian Declaratory Act, 283, 284.
- Liddon, Canon, on theories of Inspiration, 206.
- Lindsay, David, Rev., Spiritual instructor of Esmé Stewart, 22.
- Livingstone, Neil, Dr, *Scottish Metrical Psalter of 1635*, 9.
- Logie, Gavin, of St Andrews, saying regarding, 118.
- Lorimer, Peter, Prof., on First Scottish Confession, 16, 16.
- Luther, Martin, Scottish Parliament on opinions of, 56; writings widely circulated in Scotland in 1527, 58; denounced Copernicus, 148.
- Lyell, Charles, Sir, Age of the Earth, 147.
- MACEWEN, A. R., Prof., *Life and Letters of John Cairns*, 280.
- Mackintosh, Robert, Prof., *Essays towards a New Theology*, 303.
- acleod, Donald, Dr, Memoir of Norman Macleod, 114.
- — — Norman, Dr, Friend of Erskine of Linlathen, 100; influenced by M'Leod Campbell, 113; abandoned belief in Substitution, 113; Sabbath Controversy, 114;

- departure from confessional theology, 114; claimed liberty to do so, 114, 115.
- Macpherson, John, Rev., Estimate of Aberdeen Confession, 35; *History of the Church in Scotland*, 35.
- Magistrate, Civil, The Qualifying statement regarding, in adopting Act of General Assembly, 223, 224; province of, stated in United Presbyterian Declaratory Act, 283, 285, 286. See Cunningham, M'Crie.
- Mair, William, Dr, 249, 250, 249, 250.
- Malcolm III., his Queen and their Sons, 5.
- 'Malignant,' history of the term, 19.
- Marrow Men, The, Representation of, in 1721, 269.
- Marrow of Modern Divinity*, Evangelicism of, 122, 122; Controversy regarding, 122; in Scotland, 123; the wooing note of, 124.
- Marshall, Andrew, Dr, *Remarks on the Statement of two professors*, 142; libelled Dr John Brown, 142.
- William, Dr, *Principles of the Westminster Standards persecuting*, 244.
- Martin, Hugh, Dr, *The Westminster Doctrine of the Inspiration of Scripture*, 171.
- Martyr, Peter, and Westminster Confession's teaching, 63; a federal theologian, 68.
- M'Crie, C. G., Dr., *The Marrow of Modern Divinity. Edited with Introduction, Notes, and Appendix*, 69; *The Divisions and Re-Unions of the Church of Scotland*, 237, 280.
- Thomas, Dr, Qualified Subscription of Confession when licensed, 235; also when ordained, 236; change of view regarding Establishments, 237; vindication of Westminster Confession against charge of intolerance and persecuting principles, 243; *Discourses on the Unity of the Church*, 243.
- Dr, jun., *Life of Thomas M'Crie, D.D., by his Son*, 236, 236.
- Melancthon, Philip, Intercourse with Patrick Hamilton, 56; invited to become Professor at Cambridge, 58; his *Loci Communes*, 58; accused Copernicus of dishonesty and indecency, 148.
- Methodism, English, in Scotland, 126.
- Miller, Hugh, *The Two Records, Mosaic and Geological*, and *The Testimony of the Rocks*, and *The Mosaic Vision of Creation*, 151, 152; *The Old Red Sandstone*, 152; Vision theory of the Genesis Six Days of Creation, 152-154; *Footprints of the Creator*, 158, 158.
- — criticism of *Vestiges of Creation*, 158, 159.
- Milton, John, Vision theory of Genesis account of Creation, 152.
- Missions, maintenance of, stated in United Presbyterian Declaratory Act, 283.
- Mitchell, A. F., Prof., Edition of Hamilton's *Catechism*, 5; of *Gude and Godlie Ballates*, 6; *The Westminster Assembly: its History and Standards*, *Minutes of the Sessions of the Westminster Assembly of Divines*, 43; *The Scottish Reformation*, 14; Scripture proofs of Westminster Confession, 44; connection between Irish Articles and Westminster Confession, 52; on Chapter I. of Westminster Confession, 206; on Directories of Westminster Assembly, 221.
- Montrose, Earl of, King's Commissioner at Aberdeen Assembly, 28.
- Morer, Thomas, Rector, *Itinerary*, 10.
- Morison, James, Dr, Summary of Evangelical Union principles, 133; *The Question, What must I do to be saved? answered*, 134; dissatisfied with his own views, 135, 135; contributions to Scottish theological literature, 137; unintentional service to Secession Church, 138; relation between, and Prof. John Brown, 138.
- Robert, Rev., Shared dissatisfaction of his son James with their early views, 135.
- Morrison, Hew, LL.D., *Manual of the Church Question in Scotland: being a Handbook to the Churches (Scotland) Act, 1905, together with the Report of the Royal Commission, 1905*, 257.
- Mysticism, 73-84; Scottish, character of, 82, *et seq.*; Scottish, and Federalism, 83; Scottish *v.* Westminster Confession, 83.
- NICENE, Ante, Fathers, Rules of Faith and baptismal Creeds, 2; Council, *A Legend of*, 13, 13.

- OATH, Burgess, The, disappearance of, 273.
- Ordinance appointing Westminster Assembly, 36.
- Ordinances, Maintenance of, stated in United Presbyterian Declaratory Act, 283.
- Owen, John, Dr, *Salus Electorum*, 70; *The Divine Original Authority, Self-Evidencing Light and Power of the Scriptures. Of the Integrity and Purity of the Hebrew and Greek Text of the Scripture*, 176, 176; on penmen of the Scriptures and Inspiration, 170, 170.
- Oxford, Peter Martyr lecturing at, 68; John Ball of, 69.
- PARLIAMENT, English Declaration of, to Scottish Assembly in 1642, 38; Commissioners from, to Scottish Assembly, 39; Ordinance of Long Parliament calling Westminster Assembly, 36-41.
- Paterson, William, Prof., mode of meeting scruples of students, 255.
- Pentateuch, Composition of, according to Geddes, 178; according to W. R. Smith, 182.
- Peterborough, Bishop of, application of saying about Church of England free *versus* sober to Church of Scotland, by Prin. Story, 250, 251.
- Pleasure, Divine, The, a *vox signata* of *Westminster Confession*, 60, *et seq.*
- Poissy Conference, *Confessio Fidei Gallicana* delivered by Beza to Charles IX., at, 187.
- Polhill, Edward, *The Divine Will. The Extent of the Death of Christ*, 140.
- Pont, Robert, translator of *Second Helvetic Confession*, 57.
- Pope, The, how described in *Westminster Confession*, and in American Revised Version, 267.
- Port Royal visited by Robert Leighton, 75.
- Preamble, The, of Associate or Burgher Synod in 1797, 237-238; to Questions and Formula of United Free Church of Scotland, 297.
- Predestination, General and particular, in *Westminster Confession*, 84, 85; placo of, in earliest Reformation Symbols, 85; in Calvin's *Institutes*, 85; in later Symbols, 86; in earlier Anglican Articles, 86; in Lambeth Articles, 87; in Irish Articles, 87; in Canons of Dort, 87; statement of, in *Westminster Confession*, 87-89; distinction between, and Foreordination, 90.
- Presbyterian Alliance, Council of, upon *Apostles' Creed*, 12.
- Preston, John, of Cambridge, *Treatise on the New Covenant; or, The Saints' Portion*, 69, 69.
- Princeton Divines on Inspiration in *Westminster Confession*, 173.
- Psalters, Scottish, appendages to, 9.
- Ptolemy. See Copernicus.
- Puritanism, British, Fuller's witty description of, 65, 66.
- QUESTIONS and Formula, of United Free Church of Scotland, 297.
- RAINY, Robert, Prin., What Inspiration consistent with admission of, in reporting, 196; *Delivery and Development of Christian Doctrine*, 306, 306.
- Rankin, James, Dr, *The Creed in Scotland*, 6.
- Rankine, John, Prof., upon provisions of Parliamentary Act of 1693, 247, 247.
- Redemption, Doctrine of, in United Presbyterian Declaratory Act, 281; Secession teaching regarding, 125.
- Regule Fidei*, 2, 225, 225.
- Reid, H. M. B., Prof., *Layman's Book of the General Assembly*, 248, 249, 250, 251, 253, 254, 255.
- Relief, The Church of, Formula of Subscription to *Westminster Confession*, 238; Union of, with United Secession Church, 239.
- Reprobation, avoidance of term by Westminster divines, 91.
- Revision of Confessions by American Churches, 303.
- Rochelle, Synod of, and the *Confessio Fidei Gallicana*, 187.
- Romances, G. J., *Thoughts on Religion*, 147.
- Rules of Faith. See *Regule Fidei*.
- Rutherford, Lord, friend of Erskine of Linlathen, 100.
- Rutherford, Samuel, Commissioner to Westminster Assembly, 40; his *Letters* a Scottish Classic, 123.
- SALMOND, S. D. F., Prin., editor of Prof. Davidson's *Theology of the O. T.*, 200.
- Savoy Declaration, The, of 1658, 268.
- Schaff, Philip, Prof., Uses of Creeds and Confessions, 209; framing of a new Confession, 305, 305.

- Science, Relation and influence of, to Westminster Theology, 146-167.
- Scott, Alexander J., Friend of Erskine of Linlathen, M'Leod Campbell, and Edward Irving, 105; ministerial career, 105, 106; deprived of licence by Assembly of 1831, 106; admitted his teaching was contra-confessional, 107-108.
- Scougal, Henry, Prof., friend and follower of Leighton, 79; career and writings of, 79, 79; *The Life of God in the Soul of Man*, analysis of, 80-82, 80.
- Scripture, Doctrine of, in Reformed Symbols and in writings of Prof. W. R. Smith, 186-189; silence regarding, in Apostles' Creed, 18; treatment of, in *First Scottish Confession*, 18, 19; primary place of, in *First and Second Helvetic Confessions* and in *Westminster Confession*, 168; treatment of, in *Westminster Confession*, 168-170.
- Sectaries, English, opposed 'Set Forms,' 11.
- Sedgwick, Adam, Prof., on Evolution, 160.
- Sermons, Scotch* (1880), 117; teaching of, 118, 119; contributors to, 118.
- Shairp, Prin., Friend of Erskine of Linlathen, 100.
- Simpson, J. Y., Prof., *Henry Drummond*, 164; projected recasting of *Natural Law in the Spiritual World*, 164.
- 'Sin, For their,' 'pro peccatis suis,' significance of the expression in Reformed Symbols, 91, 92, 92; in Lambeth and Irish Articles, 92.
- Original, doctrine of, in *First Scottish Confession*, 18.
- Smith, H. B., Dr, Appreciation of *Westminster Confession*, 62; *Faith and Philosophy*, 62.
- W. R., Prof., 180-190; writings of, 180-181, 180-181; believer in Revelation, Inspiration, Infallibility, and Authority of Scripture, 181; meaning of Westminster expression, 'immediately inspired,' 174; treatment of several O. T. books, 184, 185; doctrine of Scripture, 186-189.
- Society, The Church Service, appreciation of its work, 12, 13, 13.
- Sovereignty, Divine, place of, in Westminster theology, 84.
- Spirit, Holy, the procession of the, 64, 65, 65; doctrine of, in Presbyterian Church of U.S.A., 264, 265.
- Spottiswoode, John, Archbishop, and Aberdeen Assembly of 1616, 28, 28.
- Sprott, G. W., Dr, *Book of Common Order*, 9, 11.
- Spurgeon, C. H., Preface to Baptist Confession of 1689, 268.
- State, Fallen, of human nature, Statements regarding, in *Westminster Confession* and in Free Church Declaratory Act, 289-291.
- Stewart, Alexander, Prin., Formula of subscription, and Parliament, 254, 254, 256.
- Esmé, Arrival in Scotland, 22, alleged conversion and subsequent subscription of his faith, 22.
- Stirling*, King's Chapel at, 22.
- Story, R. H., Prin., 249, 250, 251, 252, 253.
- Strachan, James, Rev., dated list of Prof. Davidson's writings, 198.
- Struthers, Gavin, Dr, *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Principles of the Relief Church*, 234, 238.
- Stuart, John, Dr, *The Book of Deer*, 4.
- Substance of Reformed Faith, Free Church Declaratory Act, 292.
- Sum of Saving Knowledge*, 71, 71-73.
- Summary of Principles*, Secession, 274, 274-276.
- Sun, The, in relation to the Earth, 148.
- Symbolism in theology, where it stands, what it treats of, 1.
- Symbols, Lutheran, order of topics, 168; Reformed, order of topics, 168; Church of Scotland, 1; several schools of, 53.
- Synod, Anti-Burgher, 236, 237; Burgher, 237.
- TESTIMONY, The Judicial, Formula of Subscription, 234, 235.
- Theology, Confessional, Reconstruction of, in Scotland, subsequent to and independent of *Westminster Confession*, 269-278; in terms of the Westminster Confession, 279-302; in the future, 302-308.
- Tulloch, John, Prin., Concurred in views of M'Leod Campbell, 115; *National Theology and Christian Philosophy in England in the XVII. Century*, 116; Spirit of Rational Inquiry versus the Logic

- of Dogmatism, 117; a second Calvin undesirable and impossible, 116; Calvinian intolerance, 117; Predestination removed, 117.
- UGIE, Monastery on banks of, in Celtic Church, 5.
- Union, Evangelical, formation of, in 1843, 132; distinctive principles of, 133-137.
- Secession in 1820, 239, 273; of Secession and Relief Churches, 239; basis of Union and subordinate Standards, 240, 241.
- United Presbyterian, and Free Church in 1900, 296.
- Universalism in Theology, 84-119.
- Ursinus, Zachary, *Summe of the Christian Religion*, or Catechism, 11.
- Ussher, James, Archbishop, 3, 55, 55, 147.
- VATICAN Council in XIX. Century, 2.
- Vestiges of Creation*, 157-159, 158; estimate of, by Darwin, Huxley, Miller, and Sedgwick, 158, 158; what to be said in favour of, 159.
- Victoria, Presbyterian Church of, *Declaratory Act*, 287.
- WALKER, Rev. Mr, Comrie, suspended by Presbytery of United Presbyterian Church on charge of heresy, 139; acquitted by Synod after explanations; 139.
- Wallace, A. R., on Evolution, 157, 161.
- Wardlaw, James, subscribed Formula with explanation, 233, 233.
- Warfield, B. B., Prof., Proof texts of *Westminster Confession*, 44; punctuation of *Do.*, 71; 'elect infants,' 93, 94; Westminster doctrine of Scripture, 171; 'immediate inspiration,' 174; Cumberland Revisions of Westminster symbols, 262; doctrine of Common Grace, Common Operations of the Spirit, as held by Presbyterian Church of U.S.A., 265.
- Wesley, John, evangelistic work in Scotland, 126, 126.
- West, William, Rev., Leighton's writings, 75, 75.
- Westwood, Prof., *Facsimiles of the Miniatures and Ornaments of Anglo-Saxon and Irish Manuscripts*, 4.
- Whitefield, George, evangelistic work in Scotland, 126, 126.
- Wilson, Gabriel, Maxton, *Sermon on the Trust*, 123.
- William, Dr, Dundee, Right of the Church anent Confessions, 258, 258.
- Wishart, George, Translation of *First Helvetic Confession*, 56, 57, 57; important declaration appended to translation, 211, 212.
- Witsius, Herman, *Economy of the Covenants*, 70, 70.
- Works, Good, How described in *Westminster Confession*, and in American Revised Version, 267.
- YEAR, *The Christian*, quotation from, 164.

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